

IVANHOE

BY

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THE RESCUE OF IVANHOE

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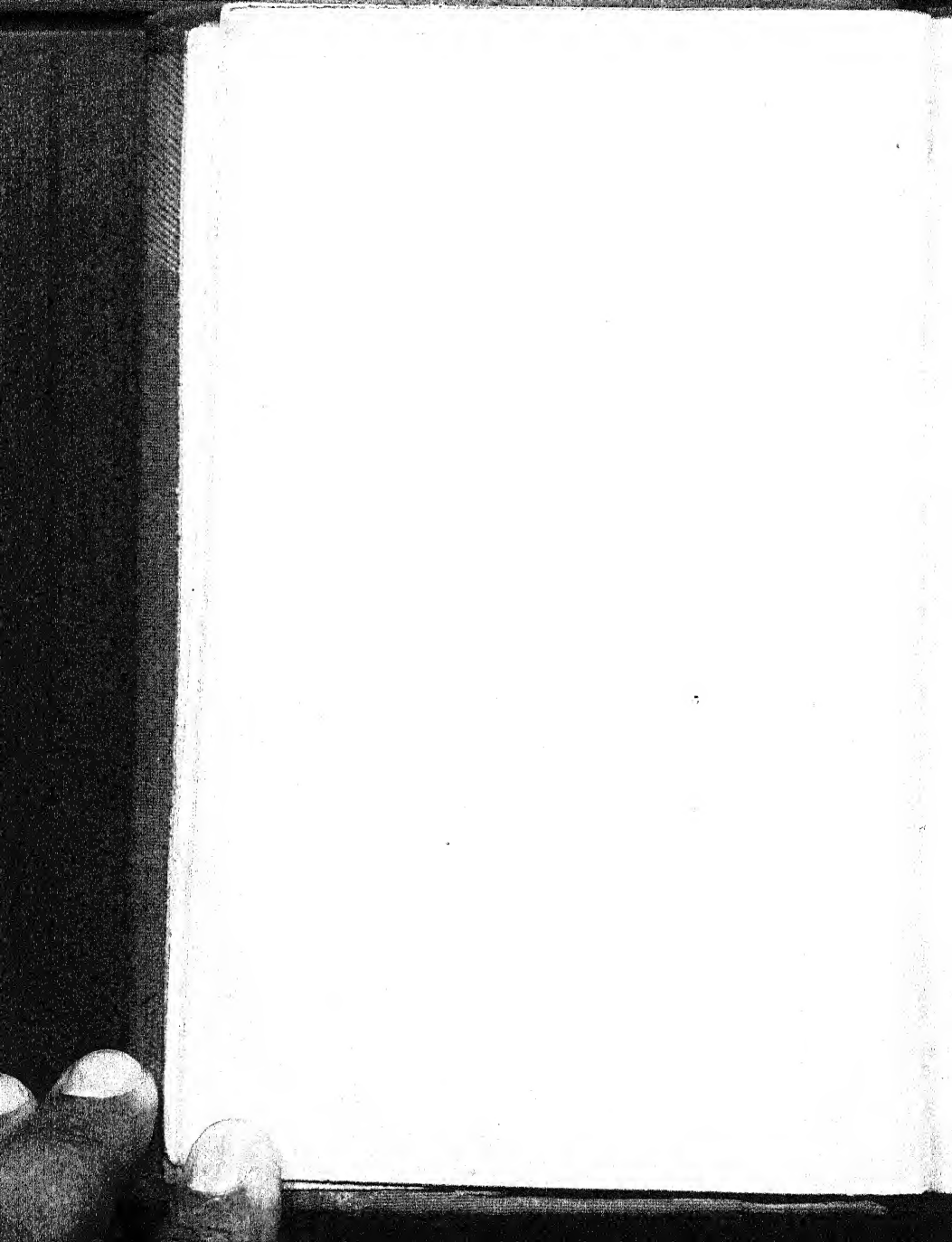
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IVANHOE

CHAPTER I

Introductory. The Swineherd and the Jester in the forest.

IN that part of England through which the River Don flows, there used to be a great forest covering Yorkshire from Sheffield to Doncaster. Parts of it still remain on great private estates. This forest is famous as the scene of great battles during the Wars of the Roses, and as the home of historic outlaws who flourished many centuries ago, but whose names and deeds are still remembered.

This forest is the chief scene of our story, and the time is the regency of the bad Prince John. His brother, Richard I, was the real king, but John was ruling in his place, as Richard was a captive in the hands of the Emperor of the Germans. Richard had been fighting against the Saracens in Palestine. On his way back to England he had been shipwrecked, and had fallen into the hands of his enemy, the Duke of Austria, and the Duke had sold him to the Emperor, who was also Richard's enemy.

Richard I was in the Emperor's prison, and John was ruling in England and plotting to take his brother's throne at about the time of Muhammad Ghori and Prithiviraja in India.

England at this time was in a very bad state. Richard, who cared more about fighting than ruling, had been abroad in Europe or Palestine for years before he was captured, and the country had been at the mercy of the nobles. As there was no strong ruler to keep them in order, the nobles

began to gather larger and larger bands of soldiers, to make their castles stronger and stronger, and to become each a petty king in his own district. There soon came to be no law in the country except the law of the nearest noble, and his laws were all for his own benefit.

What made matters worse was the fact that since the Norman Conquest the Normans and the Saxons hated each other bitterly. The Normans whom William the Conqueror brought with him from Normandy in France, and the Saxons whom Harold led to meet him at the battle of Hastings in 1066, all came in the first place from the same part of Northern Europe. But the men who had sailed up the Seine and settled in France, although so similar in race to the men who had sailed up the Thames and settled in England, had learned the French tongue and French manners, and called themselves Normans. Here they had learned better ways of fighting, building, dressing, cooking, and living, and they despised their Saxon brethren, who were rougher, ruder, and slower, if more honest and strong.

When William the Conqueror won the battle of Hastings and conquered England, he rewarded his Norman officers by giving them the lands of the Saxon nobles who had fought against him. These men built great stone castles on their new lands and brought Norman soldiers to guard them. The soldiers treated the Saxon people roughly, and the Norman nobles taxed them very heavily.

By the time this story opens, the Normans and Saxons had been living together for over a hundred years, but were still far from friendly. Had Richard remained in England and made the nobles treat the people well, the Saxons would not have hated the Normans so much. As it was, men who had been great landowners before the Norman Conquest were now quite poor, those who had been free were no longer free, and every Saxon had to obey and follow the Norman lord of the county or district in which he lived.

Moreover, French was the language of the law-courts. A Saxon could not understand what was being said, and the Norman judge, even if he were just, could not understand the Saxon.

Every government office, from the highest to the lowest, was held by a Norman, and every Norman did what he could to injure and annoy any Saxon.

The Normans looked down upon the Saxons and despised them as rude, coarse, and vulgar people, and in return the Saxons bitterly hated the Normans. It was not until the strong hand of Edward III kept order and gave equal justice, that the two races began to unite and grow into one nation.

The sun was setting upon one of the grassy open spaces in the forest referred to above, and throwing long shadows from the old oak trees under the branches of which Julius Caesar's Roman soldiers had marched in days gone by. Two men, at the moment at which this story opens, sat talking together beside a stream.

The elder of the two had a stern and savage look. His dress was that of his class and time. It was a close-fitting jacket made from the skin of some animal, with the hair on the outside. This garment reached from his throat to his knee, and was made with holes for the head and arms. He wore no other clothing except sandals, like boot-soles, from which long rolls of thin leather were twined round and round each leg as high as the knee. A broad leather belt with a brass buckle kept the jacket tight and close to the body, and held a ram's horn and a knife. The ram's horn had a mouthpiece and was used by him for blowing blasts as a signal to his flock. The knife was long, broad, sharp-pointed, and two-edged, with a buck-horn handle. Even at this early date, seven hundred years ago, the knife bore the name of Sheffield.

The man was bare-headed. One curious thing he wore.

Around his neck was a strong brass ring like a dog's collar. It was too small to go over his head and had no opening. Nothing but a file could remove it. On it was carved in Saxon writing, 'Gurth, the son of Beowulf, is the born slave of Cedric of Rotherwood.' Beside the swineherd (for that is what he was) sat a man about ten years younger, dressed in strange clothing. His jacket was bright blue, and rough pictures had been painted on it. His short cloak of bright red cloth had a light yellow lining. He had thin silver bracelets, and round his neck was a silver collar like that of the other man, on which were carved the words, 'Wamba, the son of Witless, is the slave of Cedric of Rotherwood.' He wore sandals like those of his companion, but instead of leather thongs around his legs he had a pair of leggings or gaiters, one of which was yellow and the other red. He had a cap on which were a number of bells that jingled as he moved. His strange dress and half-mad, half-clever expression of face showed he was one of that strange class of servants called jesters. These people were kept by wealthy men to amuse them in their leisure hours with stories, jokes, songs, and tricks. They were often clever conjurers, musicians, and story-tellers, and were allowed to make fun of everyone and everything.

To make him look still more foolish he wore a wooden sword.

Different as these two men were in dress, they were still more different in looks and manner. Gurth was sad, sullen, and angry, while Wamba appeared quite cheerful and contented with his lot. They talked together in Anglo-Saxon, which was rather different from modern English, the language built up by the Saxons and Normans together.

'Unless I drive the pigs home they will be stolen by the two-legged wolves,' said Gurth, referring to the Normans.

'Here, Fangs ! Fangs !' he called to his ragged wolf-like dog, after he had blown his horn, 'drive them along,' and,

turning to Wamba, said, 'Go round the hillock and drive them this way, will you?'

'Well,' replied Wamba, 'I have asked my legs about it, and they think it would be wrong of them to carry me through all that mud, and they refuse they do it. Better call Fangs back and leave the herd to their fate—whether that may be soldiers, outlaws, or thieves. Anyhow, the pigs will be Normans by the morning, and that will be a good thing for you.'

'How can pigs become Normans, and that be a good thing for me?' asked Gurth.

'Well, what do you call these brutes?'

'Swine, of course.'

'Yes, and "swine" is good Saxon; but what do you call the dead pig?'

'Pork.'

'Yes, and "pork" is good Norman. So while the swine are alive they are Saxons, but when they are dead they are Normans,' said Wamba. 'In the same way Saxon Ox becomes Norman Beef, and Saxon Calf becomes Norman Veal as soon as they are killed for food.'

'Yes,' said Gurth, 'and all the best goes for their food. These Normans steal the best of everything, and there is not a law-court to which we can go if we are wronged, and a Norman can do exactly as he likes. There is no king and no law to punish him and do equal justice to all men. But our master, Cedric, has done his best for us. I wonder what will happen when the new Norman lord, Reginald Front-de-Bœuf, comes to this district and lives at the castle. Cedric will be able to do nothing then. His soldiers will take what they like and do as they like.'

'Hark!' said Wamba, 'I hear horses; I wonder who is coming this way.'

'Never mind about them,' said Gurth, 'I hear thunder, and that is much more important. Let us get along home.'

Picking up his long staff Wamba arose, and the two men and Fangs, driving the herd before them, made their way through the forest to the home of their master, Cedric the Saxon of Rotherwood.

CHAPTER 2

The Knight Templar and the Prior are guided to Cedric's house by the Pilgrim.

THE horsemen heard by Wamba soon overtook them on the way. There were ten of them, of whom two appeared to be gentlemen, and the others their servants. One of the leaders was clearly a priest of high rank. He was dressed as a monk, but his clothes were of far finer stuff than monks usually wore. He was stout and handsome, and he looked as though he enjoyed life and denied himself nothing. Quite contrary to the rules of the society of monks to which he belonged, he wore costly furs and gold ornaments, and seemed to think at least as much about the world and his body as about heaven and his soul. He rode a fat mule, whose saddle was richly decorated, and whose bridle was hung with silver bells. He was a good horseman, and it seemed that he only used the mule for the road, and kept a valuable Spanish horse for sport and hunting, as such an animal was led by one of the monk's followers. This horse was covered with a fine cloth, on which were embroidered badges and emblems of the owner's rank and position, while another mule carried his baggage.

The horseman who rode with the priest was a man over forty years of age, thin, strong, tall, and muscular. He looked brave and hardy, as though he had known the dangers of battle and the hardship of travel under a tropical sun. His face was harsh, fierce, and strong in expression, and he seemed a man of quick, fiery temper, one who would have his own way at any cost. A deep scar, caused by

a sword-cut in some battle, gave his face a still sterner and more sinister look.

His dress was somewhat like that of his companion, but, being scarlet, showed that he was not a monk, but a soldier who fought for the Church and his religion. On the right shoulder of his cloak was a cross, showing that he belonged to the order of Knights Templars, gentlemen who spent their lives in what they considered holy wars against those who were not of their own faith. Beneath his robe he wore a shirt of chain-mail with sleeves and gloves of the same, almost as flexible as if made of wool instead of steel. Chain-mail also covered his legs, while thin pointed plates of steel protected his knees and ankles. He wore a long two-edged dagger in his belt. He rode a good horse, called a 'hackney', for the road, but behind him his squire (or gentleman-servant) led his splendid great war-horse all ready for battle. On one side of the saddle hung a short battle-axe, and on the other the rider's big plumed helmet and hood of chain-mail, with a long two-handed sword. Another squire carried his master's great lance, on which was a small flag bearing a cross like the one embroidered on his cloak. He also carried his small triangular shield, covered with a cloth which prevented the owner's emblem from being seen. Any one seeing his crest or coat of arms would know who he was, even though his face was covered by his helmet.

The two squires were followed by two men whose turbans and strange dress and weapons showed that they came from the East. They wore curved swords, Turkish daggers, silver chains and ornaments, and silken dresses. Their horses were of the Arab race, and far lighter, finer, and faster than the big heavy Norman horses used by the European soldiers of the day.

The whole appearance of this knight and his followers was wild and foreign, and excited the curiosity of Gurth and Wamba as the party drew near.

They knew the monk well as the Prior of Jorvaulx Abbey.

and as a priest much more given to hunting, sport, and pleasure than to the duties of his high office as the chief of a great monastery.

Prior Aymer was a man of very good Norman family and a favourite with the Norman nobles and gentlemen of Yorkshire. He was a pleasant companion, a good rider and sportsman, generous and kindly, and a man of authority and dignity. He knew enough of books to appear very learned, and had sufficient gravity of manner and language to possess an air of the greatest sanctity. But he preferred feasting to fasting, and playing to praying, and was much more liked for his kindness than respected for his goodness by the people.

As the horsemen approached, Prior Aymer called out to Wamba in a mixed language of Norman and Saxon words, 'Is there in this neighbourhood the house of any good man who would give a night's lodging to two poor sons of Mother Church?'

'Well,' thought Wamba to himself, 'if these are *poor* sons, I wonder what the rich ones are like!' Aloud he said, 'If the reverend gentlemen would ride on to Brinxworth they would find a priory where they would be most welcome—or if they preferred a sad evening of fasting and prayer, there is a cave at Copmanhurst where lives a holy man who would give them the benefit of his pious conversation.'

The prior shook his head and said, 'No, churchmen should not live on churchmen. Let them give ordinary people a chance to serve God by helping his servants.'

'I am but an ass and wear bells like your reverence's mule,' said Wamba, 'but I thought charity began at home.'

'Hold your tongue, fellow,' said the armed rider in reply, 'and tell us the name of the Saxon landowner who lives near here. What is his name, Prior?'

'Cedric the Saxon,' replied Prior Aymer. 'Can you show us the way to his mansion, my good fellow?' he inquired of Gurth.

'It is a long way and the family retires early to rest,' replied Gurth, in a sullen manner.



'Then let them get up and serve us,' said the knight.
'We can command as well as ask.'

'I don't know whether I should take those to my master's house who "command" what most people beg as a favour,' answered Gurth.

The knight spurred his horse at Gurth and raised his whip in anger, but Prior Aymer pushed his mule in between them as Gurth drew his knife.

'Come, brother Brian, you are not in an enemy's country now,' said he. 'We don't want any blows here.' Turning to Wamba he gave him a small silver coin and asked him the way.

'The sight of your companion, reverend sir, has so frightened me that I have forgotten it,' replied Wamba, who, like Gurth, thought these Normans would be better in some other house than that of their Saxon master.

On being pressed, Wamba at length gave full directions to the two Normans, which, if carefully followed, would certainly *not* bring them to Cedric's house.

As they rode away, Gurth said to Wamba, 'Well done. It would be a pity for Prior Aymer to see the Lady Rowena, and Cedric would surely quarrel with this rough military monk.'

Meanwhile the prior and the knight went on their way talking of Cedric and his family.

'It is a good thing you did not strike that man, as he is one of Cedric's people. Cedric is a proud, jealous man, and a hater of Normans. He would have quarrelled with you when the man reached the house and told him. He fears no one, and even withstands Norman nobles like Reginald Front-de-Bœuf and Philip Malvoisin, who are very powerful. He is descended from Hereward, and people always call him Cedric the Saxon, as he thinks it much finer to be an old Saxon than a new Norman.'

'I hear his daughter, the Lady Rowena, is very beautiful,' said the knight.

'Yes,' replied Aymer, 'she is one of the most beautiful of women, but she is not his daughter. She is descended from the Saxon kings, and is only very distantly related to him. He loves her as a daughter, however.'

After a time the party began to wonder whether they

were on the right road, and, as they were arguing whether they should take the left or the right-hand path, they saw a man sitting beneath a tree. On asking him the way to the house of Cedric, the prior learned that he was himself going there and would guide the party through the forest.

Taking a route entirely different from that described by Wamba, he brought them safely to the place they sought, a big mansion containing several courtyards and enclosures, and covering a large area of ground. Though clearly the abode of a man of wealth and importance, it was nothing like the high stone castles of the Norman barons.

While waiting for admission, after the Templar had wound his horn loudly, Prior Aymer asked the stranger who and what he was.

'A pilgrim from the holy land of Palestine,' was the reply.

On hearing this, the Knight Templar remarked, 'You would have done better to stay and fight for the recovery of Jerusalem.'

'True,' replied the pilgrim, 'but when a great and noble knight like yourself (who has sworn to spend his life in fighting for the faith and the recovery of the Holy City) is found so far from the Holy Land, can you blame a poor peasant like me for not being there?'

Before the knight could make an angry answer, the gate in the outer stockade, or wall of wooden beams, was opened in reply to the blasts of the horn, and they were admitted to the mansion of Cedric the Saxon of Rotherwood.

CHAPTER 3

Cedric consents to entertain the wanderers.

IN a long, wide, and low hall a great oaken table made of planks hewn from the forest trees stood ready prepared for the evening meal of Cedric and his household.

At each end of the hall was a huge fireplace, from which a good deal of smoke came into the room, besides what went up the chimneys. On the walls hung weapons—swords, spears, and shields—and at each corner of the room doors led to other apartments of the great building.

The floor was of mixed earth and lime, beaten hard and flat. For about one quarter of its length the floor of the hall was raised by a step, and the space, which was called the dais, was used only by the family and visitors of high rank. Across the dais was a table covered with a fine cloth, and from the middle of it ran a longer and lower one down the hall, for the use of the servants and people of lower rank than the family. The whole formed a figure like the letter T. Great heavy chairs and stools stood by the table on the dais, and at this end of the hall the walls were covered with hangings or curtains, and the floor with a carpet. In the centre of the upper table were placed two chairs, higher than the rest, for the master and mistress of the family.

One of these seats was occupied by Cedric the Saxon, who, though only a 'thane', in Saxon speech, or a 'franklin', as the Normans called him, was a proud and haughty man, and thought himself the equal of any Norman baron in Yorkshire.

In face he looked open and honest, though of hot temper. In body he was of middle size, broad-shouldered, long-armed, and very strongly built, with the air of one accustomed to war and the chase. His long yellow hair, equally divided upon the top of his head, hung down upon his

shoulders, and, though Cedric was nearly sixty years of age, it contained little grey. His dress was a tunic or coat of green, with fur at the neck and cuffs, and beneath it was a red garment which fitted closely to his body. He wore short breeches of the same stuff and colour, which left his knees bare. His feet had sandals with thongs of fine leather covering the leg to the knee and fastened with gold buckles. He wore gold bracelets and a heavy chain of gold around his neck. About his waist was a belt studded with precious stones, and in it a short, straight, two-edged sword. Behind his seat hung a scarlet cloth cloak lined with rich fur, and a finely embroidered cap. A short boar-spear leaned against his chair, ready to serve him as a staff or a weapon when he walked abroad.

Several servants, dressed in clothes which were about half-way in value between those of Cedric and Gurth, stood near the dais, and two or three, superior to the others, waited on the dais. Others, again, stood round the hall behind the benches of those about to eat their evening meal. A number of hunting dogs, large and small, of various breeds, impatiently awaited the arrival of supper.

Cedric was not in the best of tempers. He was hungry, and he was kept waiting. The Lady Rowena, who had been riding, had been caught in the rain and had not yet come from her apartment after changing her wet garments; and Cedric—being a gentleman—would never commence a meal until any ladies of his family, or among his guests, were ready. Another thing annoyed him: Gurth, Wamba, and the herd of swine (which were of considerable value) had not returned from the forest. This might well mean that some Norman baron and his men had killed the two Saxons and driven the herd to their castle.

‘Where can the good slave Gurth and my faithful Wamba be?’ he said. ‘Am I to hear that some vile Norman thief has had them murdered, and carried off my property to keep his hungry robbers and filthy rogues from

starving? Why have we no justice in the land? I will go out myself and fight them, if it is so, and use my spear for my plea. I will show them I am of the race of Hereward. Ah! Wilfred! Wilfred!' he continued in a lower voice, 'could you have been wiser than to fall in love with one whom you may never wed, your old father would not be left alone to fight his battles unaided.'

At this moment the blast of the Knight Templar's horn was heard, and shortly a gate-keeper entered and said, 'Sir, the Prior Aymer of Jorvaulx and the good Knight Templar, Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, with a few followers, ask a lodging for the night, as they are on their way to the tournament to be held at Ashby-de-la-Zouche the day after to-morrow.'

'Normans both of them!' said Cedric. 'However, they are welcome, and would have been still more welcome to ride on their way. Take six servants and bring the strangers in. Here, butler, take them to the guest-rooms, see that their followers have all they want, and let their horses be stabled and fed. Give them dry clothes if they need them, put fire in the fireplaces of their rooms, and send them water that they may wash, and give them drink. Tell the cooks to add what they can to the meal, and serve it by the time the guests are ready. Tell the Normans that Cedric would himself come to welcome them, but that he is under a vow never to step more than three strides from his dais to greet any one who is not of royal Saxon blood. Begone! and see that all care and attention is given them, and let them not say that the Saxon rascal has shown both poverty and greed.'

The head butler departed with several servants to carry out his master's orders.

'Prior Aymer?' said Cedric, with a look to his cup-bearer Oswald. 'Is he not the brother of Giles de Mauleverer, now the Lord of Middleham?'

Oswald made a respectful sign of assent. 'His brother

agree
consent

sits in the seat and usurps the place of a better race than his own, the race of the Saxon Ulfgar of Middleham ; but what Norman lord does not ? This prior is, they say, a free and jovial priest, who loves the wine-cup and the hunting-horn better than the book and the sermon. Good ! let him come ; he shall be welcome. What, did you say, is the name of the Knight Templar ?

‘ Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert.’

‘ Bois-Guilbert ? ’ said Cedric, talking to himself aloud, ‘ Bois-Guilbert ? That name is well known both for good and evil. They say he is as brave as any man of his order, but has the usual vices of the Knights Templars—pride, cruelty, haughtiness, and love of pleasure. Well, for one night only, he shall be welcome too. Oswald ! serve the oldest wine, the best mead, the strongest ale, the most sparkling cider, and fill the largest horns. Priors and Templars love good wine and good measure.’

‘ So they come from Paelstine,’ he continued. How everyone listens to the tales of pilgrims and crusaders from that fatal land ! I too might ask—I too might listen with a beating heart to the lies of cunning rogues who cheat us of a meal under pretence of being pilgrims. I might ask about my son Wilfred. But no !—the son who disobeys me is no son of mine ; nor will I concern myself about his fate more than about that of the most worthless among millions of others who have put the cross on their shoulders and gone to the Holy Land to shed blood, saying, “ It is the will of God.” ’

At that moment the great doors at the bottom of the hall opened, and four servants bearing blazing torches led the guests of the evening towards Cedric.

CHAPTER 4

The Banquet. Another guest arrives.

PRIOR AYMER had changed his riding-robe for one of yet more costly stuff, and besides the heavy gold seal-ring which showed his rank in the Church, he wore many others with precious stones in them. His sandals were of the finest Spanish leather, his beard was trimmed as small as the rules of his order would allow, and a richly-embroidered scarlet cap hid the shaven crown of his head.

The Knight Templar had also changed his dress. Instead of his steel shirt of chain-mail, he wore a garment of purple silk with fur trimming, over which was the long robe of spotless white worn by the order of Knights Templars. The eight-pointed cross of his order was cut on the shoulder in black velvet. He would have looked most graceful and commanding but for his air of insolent pride and haughtiness. The two great men were followed at a respectful distance by their attendants and the guide who had brought them to the house. This man was dressed as a humble pilgrim, in a long cloak of coarse black cloth, rough sandals, and a broad hat with cockle-shells sewn to the brim. A long staff with an iron point, and a branch of palm fastened to the other end (to show he was from the Holy Land), was his only weapon. He followed modestly behind the servants of the Normans, and, not seeing a vacant place at the lower table, sat down by the fire and seemed to be trying to dry his clothes while waiting for some one to depart and leave him an empty space at the board.

Cedric rose to receive his guests with an air of welcome, and advanced three steps towards them from his dais.

'I regret, reverend Prior,' said he, 'that my vow binds me to advance no further upon the floor of the house of my fathers, even to receive such guests as yourself and this Knight of the Holy Temple. I also beg you to excuse me

for talking in Saxon, but it is my own tongue and I know little French.'

'Vows must be kept,' said the prior, 'and I understand Saxon quite well.'

'I speak French, the language of King Richard and his nobles,' said the Knight Templar haughtily, 'but I can understand you when you talk Saxon.'

Cedric glanced angrily at the man who seemed to think that no one who spoke Saxon could be a noble, but, remembering that he was his guest, he made no reply, but gave a signal for the meal to begin.

As the servants hurried to obey his commands, he caught sight of Gurth and Wamba, who had just entered the hall.

'Send those lazy rogues up here,' he shouted. When the two reached the dais, he said impatiently, 'Well, villains, and why have you stayed in the forest until now? Have you brought your herd home safely, you, Gurth, or have you left it to outlaws and thieves?'

'The herd is safe, if it please you, my lord,' said Gurth.

'It does *not* please me that I should sit here for two hours wondering what has become of you and thinking that every sort of evil has happened,' replied Cedric angrily. 'I tell you that chains and a dungeon shall punish the next offence of this kind.'

Knowing his master's hasty temper, Gurth made no excuses, but Wamba, who, as jester, was given great freedom of speech, said, 'You are neither wise nor reasonable to-night, Uncle Cedric.'

'What! you rogue,' said his master, 'do you want to go to the porter's lodge and taste his whip, that you take such a liberty as to argue with me?'

'First let your wisdom tell me whether it is just and fair to punish one person for the fault of another,' asked Wamba.

'Certainly not, fool,' said Cedric.

'Then why punish Gurth for the fault of Fangs?'

inquired the jester.

'Well, hang Fangs, if the fault is his, and get another dog,' said Cedric.

'But, uncle, is it fair to hang Fangs because he is lame and could not get the herd together?'

'And who dared to lame an animal that belonged to a servant of mine?' shouted the angry Saxon.

'Why, Hubert, to be sure, the forester of Sir Philip de Malvoisin,' said Wamba. 'He caught Fangs strolling in the forest, and said he chased Sir Philip's deer.'

'I will teach Malvoisin, and his keeper too, that the forest is free land,' cried Cedric. 'Gurth, get another dog, and if the forester lames it, I swear I will lame him. Go!—I beg your pardon, worthy guests, but I have neighbours here who are very active enemies. Let us eat, and may the welcome make amends for the poor food.'

The feast, however, needed no excuses from the giver. There was the flesh of fowls, deer, goats, and hares, several kinds of fish, great loaves of bread, cakes, fruit, and sweet puddings made with fruit and honey. Beside each person of rank was placed a silver goblet or drinking-cup, and for humbler folk there were huge drinking-horns made from the horns of cattle.

The Lady Rowena, Cedric's ward and relation, sat at her guardian's right hand. She was tall in stature, very fair, and with a noble face, the beauty of which was famous throughout Yorkshire. Her dress of pale green silk was covered by a long red robe which reached to the ground. A veil of silk, which could be drawn over the face, was draped round her shoulders. Four serving-women stood behind her chair. *covered with cloth.*

'We hope to see the Lady Rowena at the tournament at Ashby-de-la-Zouche,' said the prior.

'I am not sure that we shall go,' replied Cedric; 'I do not love these new-fashioned vanities.'

'Let us hope that our company may decide you to travel there, however,' said the prior. 'In these unsettled times,

and with the roads so unsafe, ^{guard} the escort of Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert is something to be thankful for.'

'Whenever I have wished to travel, I have found myself in no need of further escort than my good sword and my own men,' replied Cedric; 'and if I should go to Ashby-de-la-Zouche and desire a larger company than my own, I should go with my noble friend and neighbour, the Saxon lord, Athelstane of Coningsburgh. Together we could defy all the outlaws, robbers, and Norman bands in the country.'

At this moment the Lady Rowena inquired of Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, in spite of a dislike which she had taken to his haughty manner and bold looks, what the latest news from Palestine might be.

'There is nothing of importance, Lady Rowena, except that there is a truce with Saladin,' said Sir Brian.

He was here interrupted by the jester, seated as usual behind his master (who fed him from time to time from his own plate), with the remark, 'These truces make an old man of me.'

'How do they, rascal?' asked Cedric, with a smile.

'Because I remember at least three of them, and as each one was to last fifty years, I must already be over one hundred and fifty years of age.'

'I will certainly save you from dying of old age, though,' said the Knight Templar, who saw in Wamba the man who had tried to lead him and his party astray in the wood. 'I will keep you from all deaths but a violent one if you direct me again as you did to-night.'

'What, villain!' said Cedric, 'misdirect travellers! I will have you whipped; you are quite as big a rogue as you are a fool.'

'But I only mistook my right hand for my left,' said Wamba, 'and what a fool a man must be who takes a fool for his guide!'

The entrance of a servant, who said that a stranger begged to be admitted, put an end to this conversation.

'Let him in,' said Cedric, 'whoever he may be. It is a night ugly enough to drive wild animals to herd with tame. See to it, Oswald, and let him have all he needs.'

CHAPTER 5

The reception of Isaac of York. A challenge to Mortal Combat.

OSWALD, returning, whispered in his master's ear, 'It is a Jew who calls himself Isaac of York. Shall I bring him into the hall?'

'Can an unbeliever come into our presence?' asked the prior. 'Is a Jew to approach a defender of the Holy City?' asked the Knight Templar.

'Peace, my worthy guests,' said Cedric; 'I am master here, and shall welcome whom I wish. If God can endure the Jews, we can. You need not eat with him, of course. Let him have a table apart—unless the servants of Sir Brian, who wear turbans, will have him with them.'

'My servants are Mussulmans, and do not like Jews any better than Christians do,' replied Sir Brian.

At this moment the Jew entered and advanced with fear and trembling, and many low and humble bows. Though old, he would have been thought handsome had he not been a Jew—for in those dark, rude ages of ignorance, cruelty, and stupidity, all Europeans hated and persecuted the Jews. All men, from the king to the peasant, being their enemies, they lived in fear and in danger, always liable to be robbed and murdered, outside the law, and despised by the lowest scum of the towns, in a special quarter of which they were made to reside.

The Jew's dress was a plain brown cloak which covered a purple tunic. He had large boots lined with fur, and a belt around his waist, in which was no weapon. Instead of sword or dagger the belt bore only a case for writing

which is a case for writing

materials, and a small knife. He wore the high square yellow cap which all Jews were made to wear in order to distinguish them from Christians.

The welcome which this person got in Cedric's hall must have satisfied the worst enemies of this unfortunate race. Cedric himself only nodded coldly in reply to the Jew's humble and repeated salaams, and signed to him to sit at the bottom of the table amongst the lowest servants. Nobody offered to make room for him, however. On the contrary, as he passed along the line of benches down the table, the Saxon servants kept their backs turned and paid not the least attention to his timid glances. At last, as he stood looking in vain for a resting-place and food, the pilgrim, who had been sitting by the fire, got up from his seat, and saying, 'Old man, my garments are dried and I have eaten, while you are both wet and hungry,' stirred the fire and brought from the table a bowl of goat's flesh and vegetables. Without waiting for thanks, he went to the other side of the hall—either to avoid the company of the Jew or to be nearer to the dais.

The poor old Jew, having warmed his chilled hands at the fire, ate the food placed before him by the pilgrim with a haste and relish which seemed to show that his fast had been long unbroken.

Meanwhile the prior and Cedric talked of hunting and of war.

'I wonder, worthy Cedric,' said Aymer, 'that, great as your love is of the Saxon tongue, you have never learned Norman-French, since it is so rich in all the terms and phrases that field sports require.'

'Well, Father Aymer,' answered Cedric, 'I have always found that I could blow my horn with Saxon breath, cheer my dogs on with Saxon shouts, and kill the wild-boar and cut him up without requiring Norman words.'

'French is not only the proper language for the use of gentlemen at sport, but it is that of war, and that in which

ladies should be addressed and enemies defied,' said the Knight Templar in a haughty tone of authority.

'No doubt,' replied Cedric, 'but at the battle of Northallerton we let the enemy hear a war-cry in Saxon that they remembered. That was a fight in which blood flowed like water, and death was better than flight. Let us drink to the memory of the brave men who died there, and who fought so well without needing to know the Norman tongue. Let us honour all brave and strong men who fight for their faith—and those who are now at war in Palestine, be their race and language whatever it may.'

'I thank you,' said the Knight Templar; 'the order to which I belong is surely the bravest of the champions of Christianity.'

'And were there no knights in the English army of King Richard as brave as the Knights Templars?' asked the Lady Rowena.

'Forgive me for forgetting them, Lady,' replied the knight, 'but there were many brave warriors in the army of the English king who were second only to the Knights Templars, the men who are the real sworn defenders and protectors of the Holy Land.'

'Second to NONE!' said the pilgrim, who had come near enough to hear the Templar's boast. All turned to the spot whence came the unexpected interruption. 'I say,' repeated the pilgrim, in a firm and strong voice, 'that the English knights of King Richard's army were second to NONE that ever drew sword in defence of the Holy Land. I say, besides, for I saw it myself, that King Richard and five of his knights challenged all the knights in the Christian armies at a tournament, and that on that day each challenger made three charges, and each time threw his opponent to the ground with his lance.' And I say that, as Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert well knows, of the eighteen knights overthrown, no less than seven were Knights of the Temple.'

It would be hard to describe the fierce look of rage which

made the dark face of Sir Brian darker still. He seized the handle of his sword, and, but for fear of Cedric and his men, would have slain the bold pilgrim where he stood.

Cedric was delighted, and cried to the latter, 'I would give you this golden bracelet, pilgrim, if you could tell me the names of those knights who so nobly upheld the honour of England.'

'That I can do with pleasure,' replied the pilgrim, 'but my oath for a time forbids me to touch gold.'

'Never mind, friend,' said Wamba, 'I'll wear the bracelet for you.'

'The first in position, in honour, and in fame was, of course, the brave King Richard himself.'

'I forgive him,' said Cedric, 'his neglect of England.'

'The Earl of Leicester was the second,' said the pilgrim, 'and Sir Thomas Multon of Gilsland was the third.'

'He is of Saxon descent,' remarked Cedric.

'Sir Foulk Doilly was the fourth,' continued the pilgrim.

'He is Saxon, too, by his mother's family,' said Cedric. 'And who was the fifth?'

'Sir Edwin Turneham.'

'True Saxon!' shouted Cedric. 'And who was the sixth?'

'The sixth,' said the pilgrim, 'was a young knight of less fame and lower rank, whose name I have forgotten.'

'Well, I will help your memory, which has failed so suddenly,' said Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert. 'He overthrew me, but it was because my horse fell. I did not fall from the saddle. He was the Knight of Ivanhoe, and none of the others were better known than he as brave and skilful knights. But, were he in England, and would give the same challenge that he gave in Palestine, I would fight him again.'

'If Ivanhoe were in England, your offer would be quickly accepted. Should he ever return, I promise you that he will seek you out.'

‘And pray who are you, and what security do you offer as a pledge of your promise?’

‘This box, which contains a piece of the cross on which Christ was crucified,’ answered the pilgrim, taking a small ivory box from beneath his robe and giving it to the Knight Templar.

The latter, in return, took from his neck a gold chain, and, giving both chain and box to the prior, said, ‘Let Prior Aymer keep our pledges, mine and that of this nameless wanderer here, in token that if Wilfred of Ivanhoe does not accept my challenge on his return and do his best to win them, I will proclaim him a coward in every court of Europe, and blacken his name as such wherever I may go.’

‘There will be no need,’ said Lady Rowena; ‘I pledge my word that Wilfred of Ivanhoe will be but too glad to give this haughty man the lesson that he needs.’

‘Lady,’ said Cedric, who had shown signs in turn of the greatest surprise, doubt, shame, and pride at the mention of the name of Ivanhoe, ‘it is not fitting that you should speak thus. I myself am quite able to defend the honour of Ivanhoe in his absence. But the challenge is complete. On his return Ivanhoe must win the box and chain and prove himself the better knight.’

‘The challenge is complete and in order,’ said Prior Aymer, ‘and I will keep both the pledges in the safe treasury of my monastery until the fight has been decided and the winner claims them both.’

Shortly after, the feast came to an end, and the Lady Rowena arose and withdrew from the hall to her own apartments. The guests left the dais and passed down the hall to the door leading to the guest-chambers.

‘Well, unbelieving dog,’ said the Templar to the Jew, as he passed him, ‘are you on your way to the tournament?’

‘I propose to go, if it please your reverend honour,’ replied Isaac, with a humble salaam.

‘Yes, to lend money at ruinous interest to our nobles,

The pilgrim said he could not answer the first question, and that, with regard to the second, the voyage could be made fairly safely by way of Venice and Genoa, and from there through France. 'Ivanhoe,' he said, 'knows the language and manners of the French so well that he will be in no danger there.'

'I wish to Heaven that Ivanhoe could be here in time to take part in the great tournament at Ashby-de-la-Zouche. If Athelstane of Coningsburgh should defeat all comers and win the prize, I fear my guardian will betroth me to him against my will.'

The Lady Rowena then ordered one of her waiting-women to give a cup of wine and a gold coin to the pilgrim. He tasted the wine, took the coin, and, with a low bow to the lady, withdrew. Outside, he found the servant still waiting to take him to his room, and the man quickly led him to a long row of small rooms or cells, used as sleeping-places for servants and for visitors of low rank.

'In which of these is the Jew sleeping?' asked the pilgrim.

'The dog has a kennel in the next place to yours,' replied the servant.

'And which is the room of Gurth the swineherd?'

'He sleeps in the room on the other side of yours. You are between the two of them.'

The man then departed, leaving his torch for the pilgrim's use. Having shut the door of his cell and placed the torch in a kind of wooden candlestick, the pilgrim threw himself on the bed, which was a kind of frame stuffed with clean straw, and having some sheep-skins as rugs and bed-clothes.

As the first rays of the rising sun came in through the unglazed window-hole of the room, he arose, and after saying his prayers, went to the room of Isaac the Jew. Entering very quietly, he saw Isaac lying in a troubled slumber and groaning in his sleep as though in his dreams

he was again living through some time of persecution and torture.

As the pilgrim touched him with his staff to awaken him, he started up with a look of wild surprise and fear.

'Do not be afraid, Isaac,' said the pilgrim, 'I am your friend.'

'Then God reward you for your kindness to a poor old Jew,' he replied. 'And what may it be your pleasure to want with me?'

'I came to tell you that unless you leave this house at once and travel quickly, your journey will be a very dangerous one,' said the pilgrim.

'Holy Father!' cried the Jew, 'whom could it interest to pursue so poor a wretch as me?'

'You know their reason best,' replied the pilgrim, 'but as I crossed the hall to-night after dinner, I heard Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert order his Mussulman servants to watch you from the house next morning, seize you in the forest, and take you to the castle of Sir Philip de Malvoisin or to that of Sir Reginald Front-de-Bœuf.'

On hearing this, Isaac appeared to faint with fright and horror. 'Holy God of Abraham!' he cried, 'O Holy Moses and Blessed Aaron! I feel their red-hot irons tearing my flesh already.'

'Stand up and listen to me, Isaac,' said the pilgrim kindly, but with some contempt. 'Leave the house at once with me, and I will guide you by secret paths through the forest, and will see you safe with some chief or baron on his way to the tournament. No doubt you have the means to pay for the protection of such a person.'

On hearing these words of kindness and help, Isaac seemed to recover, until the pilgrim mentioned 'paying', when all his terror at once returned, and he again fell back upon the bed as though fainting, and cried, 'I possess the means of securing the goodwill of anybody? I pay money for protection? Why! I have not a single penny! I am a

ruined beggar! Pray, young man, do not betray me to these robbers—but I have no money to pay you for your help.'

'If you had all the money in the world, I should not hurt you for it, nor accept any of it from you in return for my help,' replied the pilgrim. 'I have taken a vow of poverty for so long as I wear this pilgrim's dress, and I shall not change the dress for anything but armour and a coat of mail. But do not think I want your company, if you do not want my help. Stay here, and perhaps Cedric will protect you.'

'No, he would not let a Jew travel with him,' said Isaac, 'and if I go alone through the domains of Philip de Malvoisin and Reginald Front-de-Bœuf, I shall be seized and tortured till I die. They will never believe I have no wealth. Come, good youth, let us begone at once. How can we get out unseen?'

'Follow me,' said the pilgrim, leading the way from the Jew's cell to that in which slept Gurth.

'Get up, Gurth,' said he quietly, 'unlock the small side-door, and let the Jew and me out.'

Gurth, who was offended at being awakened and ordered about by this lowly stranger, replied rudely, 'And why should the Jew and a pilgrim steal away from Rotherwood at this early hour, and why should I get up for them?'

'Because I order it,' said the pilgrim, and, stooping, he whispered something in Gurth's ear. On hearing his whispered words, Gurth leapt up in the greatest surprise, and was about to speak, when the pilgrim quickly stopped him, saying, 'Silence! be prudent as you always were. Undo the gate now, and you shall know more later on. Lead the way.'

Gurth kissed the hand of the pilgrim with great humility and hastily obeyed. He brought the Jew's mule and another for the pilgrim, who said he would return it to Cedric's

party at Ashby. As soon as they were across the drawbridge over the moat, and had reached the forest, the Jew fastened a bag to his saddle, and hastily muttering, 'Only a few clothes,' he drew the end of his cloak over it so as to hide it from sight. The pilgrim led the way through the forest by such winding and hidden paths that more than once Isaac began to fear that he was really leading him to the castle of one of the Norman barons to betray him for a share of his money.

There was little wonder that he should suspect the pilgrim, for no race on earth had ever suffered such cruelty and persecution. King John himself caught a wealthy Jew, and had a tooth torn from the wretched man's head every day until he told where his store of money was hidden. Not until nearly all his teeth were gone was he set free, on payment of a great sum of gold. When kings set such an example, it may be believed that the barons and others were not slow to follow it.

After they had travelled for some time in silence, the pilgrim said, 'That old decayed oak-tree marks the boundary of the lands of Front-de-Bœuf, and we passed through those of Malvoisin long ago. There is no fear of pursuit.'

'But do not leave me, good pilgrim,' cried the Jew; 'think of the fierce and cruel Templar!'

'We must part here,' replied the pilgrim. 'You are a Jew, and I a Christian pilgrim from the Holy Land. Besides, how could I protect you from the Knight Templar? Do I look like a fighting-man?'

'Do not leave me, I implore you. Poor as I am, I will reward you,' begged the Jew.

'Well, I will guide you to Sheffield. There you will find plenty of people of your own caste, and will be in safety.'

'Heaven reward you,' replied Isaac; 'I can go to the house of my relative Zarch, if you will guide me to Sheffield.'

'Very well, I will do so; but there we part,' said the pilgrim.

On reaching Sheffield, the latter said, 'Farewell,' but the Jew replied, 'We cannot part till I have tried to thank you for what you have done for me. I dare not ask you to come to the house of Zareth that he may reward you.'

'I have already told you that I want no reward,' said the pilgrim as he turned away.

'Stay, stay,' cried Isaac, 'I am the poorest of all Jews, and have no money at all—but I can guess what it is that you most desire at this moment. It is a good horse and armour.'

The pilgrim started. 'How did you know that?' he cried.

'No matter,' said Isaac, 'I have guessed rightly, and I can supply your want.'

'But how could a humble pious pilgrim, just returned from visiting the Holy City of Jerusalem, need a horse and armour?' asked the other.

'Oh, I know you English nobles,' replied Isaac. 'Often you take off your fine robes and armour, and put on a poor pilgrim's gown, and go to Jerusalem as the Mussulmans who would be *hadjis* go to Mecca. And as you stooped over my bed this morning, I saw that you carried the gold chain and gold spurs of a knight in the bosom of your robe.'

'Ah,' said the pilgrim with a smile, 'and if *you* were now searched, what strange discoveries might not be made!'

'No, no,' replied the Jew. 'I am a poor man and have nothing. I am a beggar. But wait while I write,' and, taking the writing materials from his case, he began a letter in the Hebrew character. When he had done, he gave the paper to the pilgrim, saying, 'In Leicester all men know the rich Jew, Kirjath Jairam. Give him this. He has some splendid armour and horses for sale—the worst of them fit for a king

who had to fight for his throne. He will give you your choice of the best of these, and everything you may need for the tournament. When the tournament is over you can return the horse, armour, weapons, and other things to Kirjath.'

'But, Isaac,' said the pilgrim, smiling, 'do you know that when a man is thrown from his horse and defeated in these tournaments, his armour, weapons, and horse become the property of the man who defeats him?'

'The blessing of God will be upon you,' said Isaac. 'Your spear will be as powerful as the rod of Moses, and you will win.' So saying, he was about to ride away, when the pilgrim seized his cloak and said, 'But, Isaac, think of the risk! The horse may be killed and the armour injured. Your tribe give nothing for nothing. Why should Kirjath Jairam do this?'

'If there be damage I will pay for it,' said Isaac, 'but be careful and run no foolish risks. I speak for your own safety, and not on account of the horse and armour.'

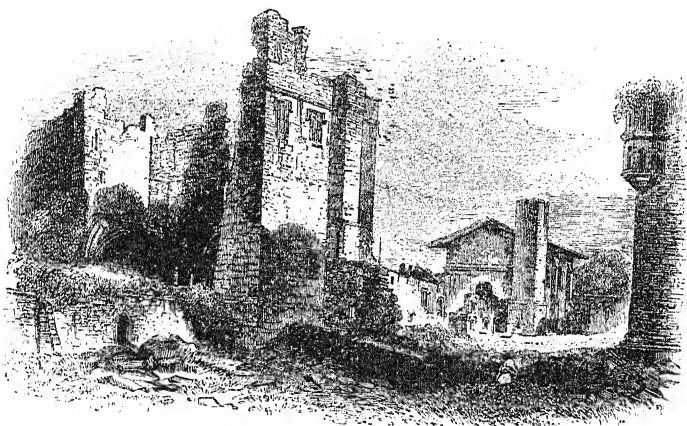
They parted, and took different roads to the town of Sheffield.

CHAPTER 7

The preparations for the Tournament, and the arrival of Prince John.

PRINCE JOHN, who was ruling England at this time, was in league with Philip of France, King Richard's greatest enemy, and both were doing everything in their power to keep the emperor from setting Richard free. Meanwhile, John, who was the worst man that ever ruled in England,

was making plots to prevent Arthur, the son of his elder brother Geoffrey, from coming to the throne in the case of King Richard's death in prison. As is well known, he succeeded in usurping the throne when Richard was killed while fighting in France. Meanwhile, he ruled in England so badly, that people were tempted to envy those who died.



Wretched as the poor, oppressed, and over-taxed people were, they loved to see a tournament. Such an event was a bright spot in their dark lives, and they thronged from far and near to see the sight.

The tournament at Ashby (or Ashby-de-la-Zouche), in Leicestershire, was a great and famous one, and Prince John himself and all the chief nobles of the kingdom came either to see it or to take part in it.

It was held in the following way. In a huge level field

of beautiful short green turf, a great enclosure of oblong shape formed the 'lists', the long space or course enclosed by palisades (or posts), down which the knights charged at each other on horseback. At each end of the lists, which were like a straight race-course, were the gates which admitted the combatants. At these gates stood the two heralds, each attended by six trumpeters, six orderlies, and a strong body of soldiers. These heralds were gentlemen who had to make sure that the knights were really the men they claimed to be and that each had a right to the coat of arms painted on his shield, to announce the names of the combatants, and to keep order.

At one end of the meadow were pitched five large and beautiful silken tents belonging to the five knights who 'held the lists', that is, challenged any knight in England to come and try to prove himself a better fighter with lance and sword. Before each pavilion or tent was hung the shield of the knight by whom it was occupied. On the shield was painted the coat of arms or device of its owner, to enable him to be known and recognized when his face was covered by his helmet and nothing of it was visible but his eyes.

The central tent had been kept for Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, as a mark of honour to his fame as a very brave and skilful knight. On one side were the tents of Reginald Front-de-Bœuf and Philip de Malvoisin, while on the other were those of Hugh de Grantmesnil and Ralph de Vipont. At the other end of the course was a large enclosed space for the knights who wished to accept the challenge of the five champions who held the lists. All round the whole meadow were the tents of soldiers and attendants, refreshment tents, others in which armourers and farriers carried on their work, stalls for horses, and blacksmiths' forges.

Round the palisades of the lists were raised galleries and stands, like those at race-courses, on which were seats for the spectators of higher rank. A narrow space

between the galleries and the palisades gave room for the middle class of people, while the lower classes had to find such room as they could by climbing upon banks of earth thrown up on rising ground that overlooked the meadow. In the centre of one side of the lists was a higher and finer gallery or grand stand, put up for Prince John and the royal party. On the opposite side, and facing it, was another for the 'Queen of Beauty', the lady chosen to distribute the prizes, or crown the victor, after the tournament was over. Who this would be, none knew before the sports began. 'Sports' seems a strange word to use for a pastime in which men lost life and limb, and in which the least that could happen to one of the two combatants was that he should be knocked violently from his horse by the spear of his opponent when both were galloping at full speed. But in those days, so long as the spears were blunt, and the aim of each knight was merely to knock the other off his horse, it was regarded as a game. Frequently, however, two knights or two parties of knights would challenge each other to fight with pointed lances, and to continue the fight with swords when unhorsed.

Soon after daylight on the day fixed for the commencement of the tournament, people began to arrive upon the scene. The poorer folk climbed trees, covered the rising ground, and even occupied the tower of a neighbouring church. Slowly the space between the stands and the palisades filled with farmers and small landowners, while the galleries themselves began to be covered with the bright dresses of the ladies and the robes of the knights and nobles of high rank.

Among those standing near the palisades below the galleries, were to be seen Isaac of York and his daughter Rebecca, a young and beautiful girl. Isaac did not get a place without receiving many angry and spiteful words from those he brushed against, and had it not been for the entry of Prince John just as he took up his position,

he might have been flung out again by his Jew-hating neighbours. Prince John was followed by a large retinue of nobles, officers, soldiers, and priests, among whom was our old friend, Prior Aymer of Jorvaulx, as gaily and richly dressed as any of the young and wealthy nobles surrounding the prince.

As he rode round the lists with his glittering party, the eye of Prince John was drawn to the spot where Isaac sat, by the turbulent attempts of some of the people around the Jew to have him removed. As the prince caught sight of Isaac (from whom he had often borrowed large sums of money, for Isaac was really a very wealthy and well-known money-lender), he cried, 'Hullo! there is the King of Cash, the Duke of Debts, and the Marquis of Money-lenders! Well, Isaac, is the beautiful girl your wife or your daughter? Your daughter Rebecca, is she! Why should our rich old rogue, who lends us money, sit among common people? Here, you Saxon fellows up there, move up and make room for my Prince of Usurers and his lovely daughter!'

The Saxon noblemen thus rudely addressed, and invited to share their place with a despised and hated Jew, were Cedric the Saxon and his kinsman, Athelstane of Coningsburgh, in whose veins was the blood of the last Saxon kings of England. This Athelstane, though a man of great strength and courage, was slow-witted and dull. While Cedric darted a fierce and angry look at the insulting prince, Athelstane stared vacantly at him as though he had not heard a word of what he had said. This greatly annoyed Prince John. 'Here, De Bracy,' he said to an officer of his foreign soldiers, 'stick your lance into that Saxon pig and wake him up!' De Bracy reached forward his long lance, and was about to drive the point of it into the slow and sleepy Athelstane, who still stared dully at John, when Cedric, drawing his sword like lightning, with one stroke cut the steel head of the lance off its wooden shaft or handle,

All the Saxon people around cheered loudly both at the strength of the blow and the bold action against the insolent Norman prince. John's face grew dark with rage, and he would have given some rash order for the arrest and punishment of Cedric, but that his followers turned him from his purpose by begging him to be patient in the presence of so large and angry a crowd.

Among those who cheered Cedric's deed most loudly, was a tall, strong, and handsome archer dressed in green, and carrying a bow six feet long in his hand and a dozen yard-long arrows in his belt. Noting his loud applause, Prince John asked him angrily why he made so much noise.

'I always applaud when I see a straight shot and a good blow,' said the archer, without any fear or agitation.

'Oh, do you? Then no doubt you can shoot well yourself?' said the prince. 'Fairly well,' was the reply. 'Then we will try you afterwards,' said John. 'Men-at-arms, keep an eye on the boaster, and see he does not escape.'

'I have no wish to escape,' said the archer quietly. 'You will find me here if you want me.'

'Meanwhile,' continued Prince John, 'you Saxon rogues stand up and make room for Isaac. The Jew shall have a seat among you, I say. Isaac, go up and sit with them.'

'No, no, if it please your honour!' cried Isaac. 'It is not fit for such as I to sit with nobles.'

'Up, dog!' shouted John, 'or I'll have you skinned alive.'

Thus urged, the poor Jew began to climb the steep and narrow steps leading to the gallery.

'Let me see who dare stop him,' cried John angrily, as he did so, for Cedric stood at the top with the clear intention of throwing the Jew down again if he dared to climb up. What might have happened never came to pass, for Wamba, springing to the top of the stairs, cried, 'Who dare stop an old Jew? Why, I will,' and waved his wooden toy

choosing the Queen of Beauty, by whom the grand prize of the whole tournament should be given on the next day.

Fourthly, on that next day, all the knights present should have a great battle, dividing themselves into two parties of equal numbers, and should go on fighting until only one was left, or until Prince John gave the signal to stop the fight. The Queen of Beauty was then to crown the knight who was the victor (either the only one left, or, if several survived, the one whom Prince John adjudged to be the best) with a crown of golden laurel-leaves. This would end the tournament, and then there would be archery for the common soldiers, and bear-baiting, bull-baiting, wrestling, and other amusements for the people.

Having finished their announcement of the rules, the heralds left the lists, which were now empty but for the marshals at either end. It was the duty of these two officials to carry out the prince's orders, stop the fighting when necessary, and see that the laws of the heralds were obeyed. All was now ready, and the enclosure presented a very gay scene. The sloping galleries and stands were crowded with the brightly clothed nobles of England—both Norman and Saxon—until there was neither a seat nor standing-room for a single person more. The interior space was crammed with lesser gentry, townsmen, farmers, minor officials, and others of the middle classes, in green, red, or blue tunics and cloaks, while all around was a darker mass of the common people, labourers, servants, grooms, foresters, soldiers, cultivators, and masterless men.

In the enclosed space at the end opposite to the tents of the challengers, was a large body of knights come from all parts of England to prove their skill and win the golden crown. From them five were chosen by lot, and allowed to ride into the lists as the first to accept the challenge given to all the knights of Christendom by the five challengers. Advancing together, the five knights rode slowly down the lists towards the tents of the challengers. Arrived there,

each of them touched the shield of one of the challengers with the handle of his lance, and then all returned to their own end of the lists and awaited the five champions. These quickly came forth from their tents, mounted their horses, and, headed by Brian de Bois-Guilbert, rode to their places at their end of the lists, each opposite to the man who had touched his shield. All being ready, the heralds blew their trumpets, and the knights galloped at each other as hard as they could go, each aiming his lance at the shield or helmet of his opponent, and hoping to knock him from his horse while retaining his own seat firmly in the saddle.

The challengers proved the stronger party. Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, Malvoisin, and Front-de-Bœuf all threw their antagonists to the ground. The opponent of Grantmesnil failed to hit him with his lance and so disgraced himself as a poor horseman, while the fifth knight and Ralph de Vipont both broke their lances on each other's shields without either being unhorsed.

Loud cheers greeted the victory of the challengers, who returned to their tents, while the unfortunate knights who had been overthrown dragged themselves to their feet in their heavy armour, and proceeded to their tents to take it off and send it with their horses to the victors, whose property both armour and horses now became.

A second and a third party of knights entered the lists against the challengers, but with the same result. Not one of the latter was overthrown, while in each encounter one, two, or three of their opponents were flung from their horses by the superior skill and strength of the five.

At the fourth entry only three knights appeared, and these, avoiding the shields of Bois-Guilbert and Front-de-Bœuf, touched those of the lesser champions. Their wisdom did not lead to success, however, for all three were thrown from their horses by the lances of the challengers.

After the fourth defeat there was a long pause. None

seemed anxious to add to the list of the challengers' victories. The spectators murmured among themselves. Brian de Bois-Guilbert and Reginald Front-de-Bœuf were hated by all the people for their cruelty, avarice, and oppression. The others, except Grantmesnil, were disliked as strangers and foreigners. None murmured more loudly than Cedric, who had earnestly hoped that some Saxon knight might overthrow one of the Norman challengers, and longed to see his evil neighbours, Front-de-Bœuf and Malvoisin, dashed to the ground in their pride and triumph. Cedric was himself a brave soldier and a skilful fighter with the Saxon axe and sword, but he had never learned the Norman method of fighting on horseback with the lance. He looked anxiously at Athelstane, who was a skilful horseman and had taken part in many tournaments, but, though brave and strong, Athelstane was lazy and without the least desire for fame and glory.

'The Normans are winning, my lord,' said Cedric; 'are you not going to strike a blow for England's honour?'

'No, I shall take part in the big fight to-morrow,' was Athelstane's reply.

Meantime, the people grew impatient; old knights said that fighting was not as good then as in the days of their youth, and Prince John gave orders for the feast to be prepared, and announced his intention of declaring Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert the best knight of that day's tournament, as he had overthrown more opponents than any other of the challengers. At this moment a trumpet was blown from the knights' enclosure, and a single knight entered the lists. He looked young and slender, was arrayed in fine armour richly inlaid with gold, and bore on his shield the picture of a young oak-tree pulled up by the roots, and the word 'Disinherited'. He rode a beautiful horse, and managed it with strength and ease as he went down the lists and saluted the prince with his long and heavy lance. On reaching the tents of the challengers, to the surprise of

all, he struck the shield of Brian de Bois-Guilbert a sharp blow with the *point* of his lance. This meant that he wished to fight the leader of the challengers in deadly combat until one of the two could fight no more.

'Have you prayed, and are you fit to die?' asked Bois-Guilbert, who was standing by his tent-door.

'I am fitter to die than you are,' was the reply.

'Then take your last look at the sun, and get to your place, for you are about to die,' said the Knight Templar.

'Thank you,' replied the Disinherited Knight; 'and in return may I advise you to take a fresh horse and a new lance, for you will want them.'

Having said this, he rode to his own end of the lists, and awaited the coming of his enemy.

Bois-Guilbert took the advice of his opponent, mounted his best war-horse, and took a fresh spear and his strongest shield. When the two knights stood ready at the ends of the lists, there was a dead silence throughout the great assembly. All were watching with the closest attention, and most expected that the famous champion would quickly and easily dispose of the rash young man who had dared to make the combat a real one with pointed lances and sharp swords. Few expected him to win; all wished him well for his courage.

The trumpets gave the signal. The two knights dashed from their places at full speed, and met with a crash in the centre of the lists. Each struck the shield of the other fair and true with the point of his lance, and each lance was shattered to pieces with the force of the charge. Both knights reeled in their saddles; both horses were driven back on their haunches until it seemed that they must fall over backwards onto their riders. But neither horse nor rider fell, and, returning to their places, both knights took fresh spears.

Loudly the spectators cheered; and then again, as the heralds put their trumpets to their lips, a sudden hush fell

upon the vast crowd, as every man and woman leaned forward and watched the second charge with breathless interest.

A second time the trumpets gave their loud signal, and a second time the knights galloped at full speed to meet each other. In this encounter the Knight Templar again aimed at the shield of the Disinherited Knight, but the latter took the more difficult and more deadly course of aiming at the helmet of his opponent. Could he strike the Templar fairly in the centre of the face of his helmet, where the eye-holes enabled him to see out, it was almost certain that he would bring him down. With a mighty crash the men and horses met in full career. The lance of Sir Brian struck the shield of his opponent and nearly drove the latter from his saddle, but the Disinherited Knight's spear struck the helmet of the Templar right in the centre, and the point caught fast in the bars of the visor or face-guard.

Even then the Templar might have kept his seat, but the strain was too great for the girths of his saddle, which burst, and man and saddle rolled on the ground in a cloud of dust. The great champion was unhorsed and beaten by the unknown knight.

Springing to his feet, mad with rage and shame, the Knight Templar drew his sword and rushed at his enemy. The latter, dismounting from his horse, that he might not take any advantage of the other, also unsheathed his sword and sprang to the attack. The marshals, however, spurred their horses between them, and reminded them that the rules of the first day's tournament allowed only mounted fighting; and further, that, having been unhorsed, Sir Brian was defeated and must retire.

'We shall meet again, I trust,' said the Templar, 'where there are none to separate us.'

'If we do not,' replied the other, 'the fault will not be mine.'

They then separated, and the Disinherited Knight asked a herald to announce that he would fight each of the other challengers in turn.

Front-de-Bœuf met him next, and, as he nearly fell, and also lost a stirrup in the encounter, he was adjudged beaten. Sir Philip Malvoisin came third, and, as his helmet was struck off by the lance of his enemy, he too was the loser. In the fourth fight the unknown knight showed himself as gentlemanly as he was brave and strong, for Grantmesnil's horse, being young and wild, plunged about and dis-



turbed its rider's aim. Instead of taking advantage of this, the Disinherited Knight raised his lance and let his opponent pass unhurt, and gave him a second chance on a quieter horse. But Grantmesnil declined this, saying that the other had won by his courtesy as he would by his skill.

In the fifth encounter he hurled Ralph de Vipont from his saddle with such force that the blood gushed from his mouth and nose, and he was carried senseless from the lists.

Amidst loud cheering and applause, Prince John declared the Disinherited Knight the victor in the day's tournament.

CHAPTER 9

The choosing of the Queen of Beauty.

THE marshals brought the news of the prince's decision to the Disinherited Knight, and requested him to remove his helmet, or to uncover his face by raising the visor or face-guard which protected it from sword-cuts and spear-thrusts, before coming into the presence of the prince to receive his prize. But the knight declined, saying he preferred to remain unknown. This offended Prince John, who was already angry at the defeat of the Normans and his favourite, Brian de Bois-Guilbert.

'I shall not give him the prize until I know who he is,' said he. 'Can any of you guess?'

'Perhaps he is one of King Richard's knights from the Holy Land,' said De Bracy.

'Or he might be the Earl of Salisbury,' said one.

'No, he is not big enough,' replied another.

And then a whisper arose among the prince's train of followers: 'It might be King Richard himself, escaped from the emperor's prison! It might be Richard the Lion Heart himself!'

'God forbid!' cried Prince John, turning pale and shrinking back as though blinded by a flash of lightning. 'Knights and gentlemen, remember your promises and stand by me!'

'Do not fear,' said De Bracy. 'That man is three inches shorter and six inches narrower than your brother. King Richard could never get into that suit of armour, nor could the horse carry his great weight the length of the lists.'

As he spoke, the marshals brought the victor up the steps of the gallery to the throne on which John sat. Still frightened and disturbed, John made a short speech, praising his valour and asking him to accept the war-horse as the prize of his victory. Even as he spoke, he trembled

lest the knight's reply might come in the terrible voice of his wronged and injured brother, the great Richard of the Lion Heart. But no reply whatever came from within the closed helmet, as the knight only made a low bow in return for the prince's praise and gift. The Prior Aymer of Jorvaulx, however, here reminded Prince John that it had been proposed to allow the champion to choose the Queen of Beauty, who was to crown the victor after the great fight of the morrow.

'Sir Disinherited Knight,' then said Prince John, 'since that is the only name by which we can know you, it is now your duty as well as your privilege to name the lady who is to be the Queen of Beauty and to preside over to-morrow's festival. Ride round the lists, and from all the ladies present choose the one whom you wish to be our queen for a day.'

The Disinherited Knight then mounted the beautiful horse that he had won as the victor's prize, and rode slowly round the lists, looking at the ladies seated in the galleries, as though trying to choose the most beautiful for the honour of being the Queen of Beauty.

At length he came to the gallery in which were seated Cedric the Saxon and his party. From no part of the enclosure had the cheering for the victor been so loud as from here. Cedric was delighted to see his enemies, Front-de-Bœuf and Malvoisin, overcome, and the haughty Bois-Guilbert flung to the ground. Perhaps the unknown knight was a Saxon, and in any case the haughty Norman challengers had been defeated.

No less interest in the fate of the Disinherited Knight had been shown by Isaac of York.

'Father Abraham!' he cried at his first encounter with Brian de Bois-Guilbert, 'how fiercely he rides! He takes no care of the beautiful Barbary horse or the fine costly armour made by Joseph Pereira, the armourer of Milan.'

'If he risks his own life and limbs he can hardly be expected to spare his horse and armour,' said his daughter.

‘Child,’ replied Isaac, ‘you know not what you say. His life and limbs are his own, but the horse and armour belong to —— I must not say to whom, but they are not his own. Yet he is a good youth. Pray, Rebecca, pray for the safety of the good horse and armour—also for the safety of the youth.’

Old Isaac had been strangely filled with joy at each victory of the knight, and had calculated the value of the horses and armour which he had won by defeating their five owners.

As the Disinherited Knight now paused before the gallery, all eyes were fixed upon him, for it appeared that he had made his choice. This he had done, for raising his lance aloft he brought it slowly downwards until the point lay at the feet of the Lady Rowena, who was thus pointed out by the champion as the Queen of Beauty. The trumpets instantly sounded, and the heralds proclaimed that the Lady Rowena was the duly appointed queen of the next day’s tournament and festival, and that any one who did not obey her authority would be suitably punished. The Norman ladies were not very well pleased to see a Saxon maiden chosen as the queen, but their murmurs were drowned in the general shout of ‘Long live the Queen of Beauty’, and the cries from the Saxons of ‘Long live the Lady Rowena of the race of the immortal King Alfred’.

Little as these proceedings pleased him, Prince John could only confirm the choice of the victor. Mounting his horse, he rode to the gallery where sat the Lady Rowena, and handing her a coronet of green satin and gold, asked her to wear it as the sign of her sovereignty, and added, ‘Regard Prince John as the most sincere of your subjects, and pray grace our feast to-night with your presence. We hope that you and your worthy father and friends will come to my castle at Ashby for this purpose, and that we may have the chance of getting to know the queen who will rule us to-morrow.’

Rowena made no reply, but Cedric answered for her in Saxon. 'The Lady Rowena,' said he, 'does not speak your language, and so can neither reply to your courteous speech nor accept your invitation. I, and the Lord Athelstane too, speak only our own Saxon and follow the Saxon customs of eating and drinking, and therefore cannot dine with you either. Accordingly, we must all decline your highness's courteous offer of hospitality, but to-morrow the Lady Rowena will be the queen of the tournament by the choice of the victor and the cheers of the people.'

'What does he say?' asked John. 'Very well. To-morrow I will myself lead this dumb queen to her throne. You, Sir Disinherited Knight, will attend our feast, I hope?'

But the knight, speaking for the first time, declined in a low and hurried voice, saying he must prepare for the morrow's fight and then rest.

These refusals further offended and annoyed Prince John. As he was about to ride off in a bad temper, his eye fell upon the tall and handsome archer dressed in green whom he had rebuked for cheering so loudly when Cedric cut the head off the spear of De Bracy as he tried to prick Athelstane.

'Don't let that fellow escape,' said he to his men-at-arms, as he pointed at the archer.

'I have no intention of leaving Ashby until the day after to-morrow,' said the man; 'I want to see how the archers hereabout can shoot.'

'I will see how he himself can shoot,' said the prince to his followers, 'and perhaps he will be less boastful and impudent when I have done with him.'

He then rode away to Ashby Castle, accompanied by his friends, followers, men-at-arms, and servants, while the great assembly of people slowly dispersed to their homes.

CHAPTER 10

Isaac of York's loan to the Pilgrim is repaid.

THE Disinherited Knight had no sooner reached his tent, than squires, pages, and servants hurried to wait upon him, and offer their services in taking his horse, disarming him, and bringing fresh clothing and water for his bath. All desired to know who he was, and vied with each other in trying to win his favour. He refused all help save that of a rough-looking fellow, who kept his face hidden as much as he could in the collar of his cloak and a black cap of fur. In figure he was remarkably like the swineherd Gurth.

Hardly had the knight changed his armour for a long robe, and finished the meal provided for him by his rough-looking follower, when the latter announced that five squires, each leading a horse laden with a suit of armour, were waiting his pleasure outside. On going forth, the Disinherited Knight found that the horses and armour of the five challengers had been sent to him as the spoils of his victory, according to the laws of the tournament.

To the squire of Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, the Knight Templar, he said, 'Tell your master that I do not desire his horse and armour nor payment in return for them. Tell him that I will exchange no compliments and courtesies with him, as I am his mortal enemy, and will again fight him—this time, until one of us is killed.'

To the four other squires he said, 'Tell your masters that I should be most sorry to keep the horses and armour of such brave knights, and that I shall be very glad for them to ransom their property, as I am in need of money.' To this, one of the squires replied, 'We were told to offer a hundred pieces of gold in each case for the horse and armour.'

'Half the amount is enough,' replied the knight. 'Of the remainder, pray keep one half for yourselves and give the rest to the heralds, trumpeters, and attendants.'

The squires bowed low, thanked him for his generosity, and withdrew with loud praises of his courtesy and kindness. Turning to his attendant, the Disinherited Knight remarked, 'Well, Gurth, I think the good name of the English knights has suffered no shame in my hands to-day?'

'And I,' replied Gurth (for our old friend Gurth it was), 'have played my part as a squire fairly well?'

'Yes, you have done well, and here are ten pieces of gold for you; but many times I feared that I should be discovered through some one recognizing you as Cedric's servant. I want you now to go to Isaac of York, who is staying at Ashby, and ask him to pay himself out of this bag of money that I give you, for the horse and armour which I got through his credit.'

'No, I shall not let him pay himself,' replied Gurth. 'I will pay him myself, and about one half of what he asks.'

'Well, see that he is content, at all events,' said his master.

'He will be well content with one half of what he asks,' was the answer.

While the Disinherited Knight was receiving the spoils of his victory, and dispatching a part to old Isaac in payment for the horse and armour, Rebecca the Jewess sat with her father in a richly-furnished apartment of the house of a wealthy Jew of Ashby.

'Shall I ever see the money for that good horse and fine armour, I wonder,' said Isaac. 'I fear it is a dead loss; I fear that foolish venture has lost me a fortnight's gain. The youth will never repay me. And yet I know not. He is a good and kindly youth.'

'In any case, father,' replied Rebecca, 'you will not repent of doing a good deed to help one who saved your life as he did when you were in danger from Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert.'

‘ True, but a debt is a debt, and who pays his debt to a Jew, save when in fear of the judge and the gaoler ? ’ said Isaac.

At this moment a servant entered and informed Isaac that a man wished to see him. On being shown in, the visitor proved to be Gurth, who, after much bargaining, paid Isaac eighty gold pieces for the armour (which his master had got from Kirjath Jairam of Leicester, by means of Isaac’s letter of credit), and returned the horse unhurt.

Having paid the money and taken Isaac’s receipt, Gurth left the apartment and descended the stairs. As he was trying to unfasten the door, he heard some one behind him, and turning, found himself face to face with Rebecca. ‘ My father has been jesting with you,’ said she to Gurth. ‘ He would never take money from your master, who saved his life. Ten times the value of the horse and armour that he let him have would not be any return for so great a service as the knight did him out of kindness. How much have you just paid my father ? ’

‘ Eighty gold pieces,’ replied Gurth.

‘ Here are a hundred,’ said Rebecca. ‘ Repay your master, and keep the rest for yourself. Stay not to thank me, but hurry hence, and beware how you pass through the crowded town and lonely forest, where you may easily lose both your money and your life, even on a moonlight night like this.’

As he quickly obeyed Rebecca, Gurth thought to himself, ‘ What a day ! Thirty pieces of gold in a few hours ! Another day like this, and I shall be able to buy my freedom, take sword and shield, and follow my young master to the wars.’

CHAPTER 11

The encounter of Gurth with the Outlaws in the forest.

BUT Gurth's great day was not over. As he passed along a dark and narrow lane bordered by thick hedges and tall over-arching trees, four men suddenly sprang upon him and bore him to the ground before he could draw his knife or strike a blow with his quarter-staff or truncheon. Having bound his arms to his sides, the robbers dragged Gurth roughly along until they reached an open clearing in the forest. Here they were joined by others of their band. All wore masks and swords, and carried quarter-staves in their hands.

'What money have you, fellow?' asked the leader.

'I have thirty gold pieces of my own,' replied Gurth.

'That bag contains more than thirty pieces of gold,' said the leader.

'Yes, but it belongs to the good knight, my master.'

'And who is he?' was the next question.

'The Disinherited Knight,' was the reply.

'What, the knight whose good lance overthrew the Norman challengers to-day? If you are speaking the truth, we will touch not a penny of his money or of yours. He is too much like us for that, and dogs do not prey on dogs, nor wolves on wolves.'

'How is he like us?' asked one of the robbers whom the others addressed as the Miller.

'How? Why, is he not poor and disinherited, like us? Does he not get his living with the sword, like us? Has he not beaten those cruel rogues, Front-de-Bœuf and Malvoisin, as we would beat them? Is he not the enemy of Brian de Bois-Guilbert, as we are? Certainly he is like us.'

'Well,' said the Miller, 'it would be a shame to rob him, if he is really a true-hearted knight, who hates the lawless

and cruel Normans, but this is not the way to get rich. I suppose this fellow is to go without loss or hurt too, is he ?'

'Not if you can hurt him, Miller,' replied the leader. 'See whether he is as ready with his quarter-staff as with his tongue. Here, knave,' continued he to Gurth, 'up with your staff and fight for your life, if you would go free with your master's money and your own.'



A great and famous fight with quarter-staves then began between Gurth and the Miller, both of whom were very strong and active men, and skilful with the weapon which every Saxon could use.

For many minutes the fight went on, the heavy staves rattling against each other until it sounded as though at least half a dozen men were engaged. They were very equal in strength, courage, and skill, stopping and returning blows with the most rapid dexterity, until even in the bright moonlight the movements of their arms and staves could hardly be followed by the eyes of the onlookers. Long they

fought and equally, until the Miller, who was the best quarter-staff player of the neighbourhood, began to lose his temper at finding himself so stoutly opposed. The man who loses his temper in any game or fight is himself lost. In quarter-staff play the utmost coolness is required for success, and Gurth was as cool as he was strong and stubborn. The more cool and steady he remained, the more angry and violent the Miller became. He pressed furiously forward, dealing blows with each end of his weapon, as he held it by the middle, and trying to get close enough to Gurth to deal him a stroke on the head with the whirling staff. Gurth, on the other hand, used one end of his staff, and though he dealt only one half the number of blows, each was twice as heavy and well-aimed as those of his enemy. At length Gurth separated his hands by a yard or so, and then darted the point of his staff straight at the Miller's face, and as the latter tried to parry the thrust, he slid his right hand down to his left, and with the whole length and swing of his staff struck the Miller full on the side of the head, knocking him senseless on the spot.

'You may go free,' said the leader of the band of robbers, 'for your good fight and for the sake of your brave master. Take heed, however, that you say nothing to any one of what has happened to you here, or the Tower of London itself shall not protect you from our vengeance.'

One of the robbers then led Gurth by a secret path through the forest, and after passing several of the band posted as sentries, brought him to the road leading to the scene of the tournament. With another warning as to secrecy, he left him to seek the tent of the Disinherited Knight. The latter was greatly surprised, not only at the return of the money by Rebecca—a kindness by which he determined not to profit—but also at the honesty of the robbers.

'Since when,' said he, as he retired to his couch for the night, 'have Jews been generous to Gentiles, and robbers honest with money-laden messengers?'

CHAPTER 12

The Black Sluggard decides the second day's fight at the Tournament.

AT sunrise on the following morning preparations began for the day's fight. The marshals and their attendants made all the necessary arrangements for securing a party of fifty knights on each side, and for selecting the best of the many applicants. As on the previous day, the spectators gathered in thousands, and before the sun was far above the horizon, no seat or standing-place was vacant.

The leader of one party in the day's battle was the Disinherited Knight, while the other side was under the command of Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, who was adjudged to have been the second best of those who had fought on the previous day.

On his side were the other challengers, as well as De Bracy and the other knights of the party of Prince John (who hoped to see the Disinherited Knight overthrown, and the party of the Norman challengers victorious). The Saxon lord, Athelstane, also joined the side of Bois-Guilbert (much against the wishes of Cedric) because he was jealous of the Disinherited Knight, who had chosen the Lady Rowena as the Queen of Beauty. Athelstane considered that no one but himself had any right to pay compliments to this lady, since, though not actually betrothed to her, he hoped that she would one day consent to become his wife, as her guardian, Cedric, wished.

Upon his arrival in the lists, Prince John looked round for the Lady Rowena, and, seeing her in the company of Cedric and his party, rode to the stand on which the Saxons were, and with a bow requested the pleasure of leading her to the throne prepared for the Queen of Beauty. No sooner was the Lady Rowena installed and crowned, than the trumpets of the heralds burst forth into strains of military music, and the people shouted in greeting to the day's queen.

other with great violence before they could stop. Recovering themselves, however, they and Brian de Bois-Guilbert together attacked him. Nothing could have saved him now but the wonderful strength and activity of the beautiful horse which he had won as his prize on the preceding day. Luckily the horse of Bois-Guilbert was wounded, and those of the other two were tired out by the great weight of their bulky, armour-clad riders. For a few minutes he held his own. Darting, turning, and wheeling with the agility and quickness of a hawk, he struck each in turn, and avoided the blows of all. The lists rang with shouts of praise from the spectators. But it was clear that so uneven a fight of three to one could not long continue, and many of the nobles around Prince John implored him to throw down his staff as a signal to stop the fight, and save the life of so brave and skilful a warrior.

‘Not I,’ said John. ‘He won the prize yesterday; let some one else win it from him to-day.’

As he said this, an unexpected event quite changed the fortunes of the day.

There was in the party of the Disinherited Knight a champion in black armour, mounted on a black horse, and looking a very powerful and dangerous opponent. Hitherto he had taken little part in the fight after the first charge. He very easily beat off any who attacked him, but had attacked no one himself. He had become, in fact, more of a spectator than a combatant, and in consequence the onlookers had given him the name of the Black Sluggard.

As soon as he saw his leader’s danger, however, this knight threw off his laziness, and with a loud shout of ‘To the rescue’, dashed at Front-de-Bœuf and dealt him such a blow on the head with his long and heavy axe that, as it glanced off his steel helmet on to the head of his horse, both rider and steed rolled on the ground and lay stunned and motionless. He then turned upon Athelstane and struck him also

a blow which sent him senseless from his saddle to the earth. Having done this, the Black Sluggard once more became an idle spectator of the battle, and left his leader to fight it out with Brian de Bois-Guilbert as best he could. This the Disinherited Knight was both able and most willing to do. As he charged the Knight Templar, the horse of the latter, weakened from loss of blood, was sent rolling on the ground, and its master, unable to withdraw his foot from the stirrup, was at the mercy of his enemy. Springing to the ground, the Disinherited Knight waved his sword above the Templar's head and bade him yield or die; but seeing his favourite in such danger, Prince John threw down his staff before Bois-Guilbert could reply, thus saving him and ending the great fight at once.

Not that there was very much to end, for, of the hundred knights who charged at the first sound of the heralds' trumpets, hardly a score were on their feet—and most of these had stopped to watch the desperate fight of their leaders. Several lay dead, dozens lay wounded too desperately to move, and all bore marks of the fight which they carried to the grave.

Squires and pages now entered the lists and bore away their wounded masters, or the bodies of those who had been their masters.

As it was now the duty of Prince John to name the knight who was to be crowned by the Queen of Beauty, he made up his mind to give the honour to him whom the people had named the Black Sluggard—although he had taken so little part in the fight—and not to the Disinherited Knight, who had himself overthrown six of the best knights of the other side, as well as struck down the leader. No one could be found to agree with the prince, but he nevertheless held to what he pretended was his honest opinion.

But, to the surprise of all, no trace of the Black Sluggard could be found. He had left the lists, and, riding away to the forest, had disappeared completely.

After he had been twice summoned by trumpet and the orders of the heralds, it became necessary to choose another



to receive the honours which he had forfeited. The prince had now no excuse for withholding the due of the Disinherited Knight, and had to request the Lady Rowena, as Queen of Beauty, to crown him winner and champion

of the day's fighting. As he knelt before Rowena, he was seen to stagger as though about to fall, and, when the marshals ordered him to remove his helmet that the crown might be placed upon his head, he replied in so faint and weak a voice that his words could not be heard. He offered no resistance as the straps and buckles of his helmet were unfastened, and when it was removed his face was seen to be as pale as death and streaked with blood. On seeing the countenance of the Disinherited Knight—who proved to be a young man of about twenty-five, with sunburnt skin and fair hair—the Lady Rowena gave a sudden cry as of great surprise, but, recovering herself, placed the beautiful golden wreath upon his head, with the words, 'I crown you, Sir Knight, as victor in to-day's tournament; and no braver champion ever won a crown.'

The knight bowed his head lower and lower, until at length he fell and lay as though dead.

Cedric, who had been struck dumb with astonishment at finding that the Disinherited Knight was his own banished son, Wilfred of Ivanhoe, rushed forward as though to separate him from Rowena—whom the youth loved and wished to marry, while Cedric meant to marry her to Athelstane—but the marshals were before him. Unfastening his breastplate, they found that the head of a lance had entered his side and inflicted a deep wound.

CHAPTER 13

Bad news for Prince John. The Archers' contest.

THE name of Ivanhoe passed from mouth to mouth until it reached Prince John. His brow darkened. 'Ivanhoe is one of the chief followers of my brother Richard,' said he. 'What is he doing here?'

'Front-de-Bœuf will have to give up the lands of Ivanhoe, now that Ivanhoe himself has come back,' said De Bracy.

'Yes,' said another knight, 'this brave fellow is likely to reclaim the castle and lands which King Richard gave him, and which your highness gave to Front-de-Bœuf, when Ivanhoe went to the Crusades with the King.'

'I think Front-de-Bœuf is more likely to take some more lands than to give up what he has,' replied Prince John, 'and I am sure no one here will dispute my right to give lands to my faithful friends when their former owners neglect them and wander abroad to the wars. How can such men serve me in peace or in war, if they are always abroad?'

'I don't think this knight will give Front-de-Bœuf or any one else much trouble,' said De Bracy. 'He seems to be very severely wounded. I was sorry to see the great grief of the Lady Rowena when she found that the unknown was her old friend Ivanhoe, and likely to die.'

'Who is this Lady Rowena?' asked John.

'A Saxon heiress of great wealth and high lineage,' replied the Prior Aymer.

'Then we will improve her lineage and make use of her wealth by wedding her to a Norman. How would you like a wealthy and beautiful Saxon bride, De Bracy?'

'Any bride will suit me, provided her lands are broad and fertile,' replied De Bracy. 'I thank your highness for the gift.'

'We will not forget it,' replied John, 'and, to make sure, let us begin upon the matter at once. Send messengers to bid the surly Cedric and the fat Athelstane to our feast this evening.'

At this moment a letter was put into the prince's hand. On looking at the cover, John saw that it bore the seal of his ally, the King of France. He broke the seals and drew out the letter, which proved to consist of the single sentence—'*Take heed to yourself for the devil is unchained.*'

Prince John turned as pale as death, and trembled so that he could scarcely re-read the letter, the meaning of which he at once understood. This was nothing less than a warning from the King of France that King Richard of England had escaped from his German prison, and was on his way to England to assume the throne that John had usurped, and to punish his treacherous brother. What mercy could John expect from the man whom he had left to rot in a foreign prison instead of raising money for his ransom, and whose place and power, money and lands, he had seized for himself?

'We must gather together with an army in some central place, such as York,' he said. 'Let us put an end to this folly and get away.'

'The people must not be disappointed and angered,' said De Bracy. 'It would be well to let them have their shooting match.'

'Yes,' said John, 'and that reminds me that I have a debt to pay to that impudent rogue who was cheering Cedric so loudly and boasting of his own skill as an archer. Let us find him.'

The heralds blew their trumpets and announced that affairs of state made it necessary for Prince John to close the revels and depart. Before he did so, however, there would be a shooting competition between such archers present as wished to enter for it, and a silver bugle and beautiful belt would be the prize.

More than thirty archers came forward as competitors for the prince's prize, but when they saw the tall, handsome archer in green who had offended John most of them withdrew, saying it was useless to compete with such a man. All seemed to know him well.

'Well, fellow,' said John to this archer, 'now shoot your best, for if you do not win the prize, I will have you flogged from the place as a noisy and impudent boaster. If you do win, I will add twenty pounds to the prize.'

'And suppose I refuse to shoot at all on such terms,' asked the archer, who called himself Locksley.

'Then I will have your bow and arrows broken, and yourself kicked from our presence as a coward,' replied John.

'Then it is no fair test,' replied Locksley. 'Why should I be expected to beat the best archers of Leicester and Staffordshire, and be flogged if I cannot? However, I will do my best.'

A target was placed at one end of the lists and the archers took turns to shoot, each loosing three arrows. The target was something like a round black-board on an easel, having a white spot in the centre with circles drawn around it. Eight men shot their arrows, and of the twenty-four shafts, ten were found in the target. Of these ten, two were in the inner ring and none in the white spot called the 'bull's-eye'.

Considering the distance, this was held to be good shooting.

The two arrows in the inner ring were shot by one Hubert, a forester in the service of Malvoisin, who was declared the winner unless Locksley could beat him.

'Now, Locksley,' said Prince John, 'will you try to beat the shooting of Hubert, or will you confess that he is by far your superior?'

'I will shoot two arrows at Hubert's mark on condition that he afterwards shoots two at mine,' replied Locksley.

'That is fair enough,' said Hubert. 'Let us have a fresh target, and I will try to put two arrows in the middle of it.'

A new target was set up, and with very great care Hubert sent his first arrow. It struck in the inner ring. Quickly raising his bow, Locksley sent an arrow much nearer to the centre of the target. Again taking a long and careful aim, Hubert shot his second arrow right into the very centre of the white spot or 'bull's-eye'.

'You cannot do better than that, Locksley,' said Prince John, 'for Hubert's arrow is exactly in the centre.'

'No,' replied Locksley, 'one can't get nearer the middle of a circle than its centre, but I can split his arrow for him,' and almost without taking aim, Locksley sent his arrow so straight and true that it split Hubert's arrow as he had said.

The people cheered loudly at such wonderful skill.

'Now for *my* mark,' said Locksley, and going to a willow-bush, he cut a rod about six foot long and peeled the bark from it, leaving it quite white. This wand he stuck in the ground where the big round target had been, and then returned to his place and asked Hubert to shoot.

'No man could hit such a mark,' said Hubert.

'Oh yes, he can,' replied Locksley, and raising his bow and arrow, he split the rod.

'There is no other man alive who could do that,' said Hubert, and retired beaten.

Prince John had then no choice but to hand Locksley the silver bugle, belt, and twenty pounds. 'I will make the twenty fifty if you will join my bodyguard,' said he.

'Thank you, noble prince,' replied Locksley, 'but when I join a bodyguard, it will be that of your brother, King Richard of the Lion Heart.'

As the people began to disperse, talking of the wonderful shooting of Locksley, Prince John said to one of his followers, 'Seek out Isaac of York, and tell the dog to send me two thousand crowns at once. The rest of the money I have demanded must be paid to me at York within six days. Tell him that if I do not have his money I will have his head.'

So saying, he rode off with his party in the direction of Ashby.

CHAPTER 14

Norman and Saxon at the Prince's Feast.

PRINCE JOHN gave his great feast in the Castle of Ashby. Not only were all the Norman nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood invited, but a few of the leading Saxon and Danish families. Troublous times were coming, perhaps civil war, when Richard returned from his long imprisonment in the castle of his enemy, and John's aim and policy was to make himself popular with all classes, high and low, rich and poor, Norman and Saxon.

Such was the weakness, fickleness, and changefulness of his mind, however, that he had no sooner won a little popularity by means of his feasts and tournaments and pleasures for the people, than he lost it all again by some wilful and foolish action.

He would make a man his friend by a long course of kindness and courtesy, by gifts and praise, by flattering and making much of him, and would then undo all his work, and lose all that he had gained, by some stupid insult.

When sent to Ireland by his father, King Henry II, to receive the homage of the Irish chieftains, he turned these valuable friends into enemies by pulling their long beards !

He was now foolish enough to indulge in a similar kind of conduct at this feast towards the very men whom he had invited there for the purpose of making them his friends and supporters by kindness and flattery.

He received Cedric and Athelstane with great courtesy, and expressed his deep regret when they made the excuse for the absence of the Lady Rowena that she was unwell.

The guests were seated at a table that almost groaned under the weight of rich food. Prince John's many cooks had done their best, and the dishes were as pleasing to the eye as they were to the taste. Besides such food as could be bought in the neighbourhood, there were rich

delicacies brought from foreign parts, pastry, cakes, white bread (rare in those days), fruits, and the most costly wines.

As a rule the Normans neither ate nor drank to excess, but John was a greedy eater and a drunkard, and his retinue followed his example. Even thus, the manners of the Saxons appeared coarse, and to the more refined Normans they seemed greedy and gluttonous rustics.

When a rich and costly dish of nightingales and foreign fruit was offered to Athelstane that he might take a small portion, he took the dish and quickly swallowed the whole of its contents, in ignorance of the fact that he was not eating common food. Throughout the meal he and Cedric, by following the old Saxon customs, gave the Normans further cause to laugh and mock at them behind their backs, and to speak with contempt of the manners of all 'rude Saxon boors', as they called them.

The long feast came to an end at last, and the guests sat drinking wine and talking over the events of the tournament. Wishing to please Cedric and make him his friend, John now stood up, and raising a goblet of wine, said, 'I drink to the health of Wilfred of Ivanhoe, the champion of the tournament, and regret that his wound prevents his being present here to-night. Let all give three cheers for him, and especially Cedric of Rotherwood, the worthy father of so brave a son.'

But Cedric arose and refused. 'No, my lord,' said he; 'I have no cheers or praise for the disobedient son who not only wishes to go against my will and marry my ward, but has given up the Saxon customs of his father and taken to the ways of the Normans.'

'Is it possible,' said John, pretending to be surprised and shocked, 'that so gallant a knight is an unworthy and disobedient son?'

'It is so with Wilfred,' answered Cedric. 'He left my humble dwelling to mingle with the gay Norman nobility of your brother's court. He went there against my wish,

and in the days of King Alfred the Great such disobedience would have been punished as a crime.'

'I think my brother gave your son the lands and castle called Ivanhoe?' asked John.

'He did,' replied Cedric, 'and a wicked thing it was for Wilfred to hold as a tenant of a Norman king the very lands which had belonged to his ancestors for centuries in their own free and independent right.'

'Then you can have no objection to my having given these lands to my good friend, Sir Reginald Front-de-Bœuf,' said the cunning John. 'He does not think it beneath his dignity to hold lands as the tenant of the King of England, even if you do.'

'I don't care whether he objects or not,' shouted the giant Front-de-Bœuf. 'I should like to see the Saxon who would take my lands away from me. You can call me a Saxon myself when that happens.'

'If any one ever calls you a Saxon,' said Cedric, 'he will pay you a compliment, and do you an honour, as great as it is undeserved.'

Front-de-Bœuf would have replied angrily, but John was before him, and forgetting that it was for the very purpose of making friends of Cedric and his brother Saxons of those parts that he had invited them to the feast, he began to insult and ridicule the Saxon people.

'It is a fine thing to be a Saxon,' said he; 'they are so clever, well-mannered, sober, and refined. They are before us in everything: yes, like deer before dogs, as they were before us at Hastings—running fast.'

Following the example of their master, the Norman nobles each in turn uttered some insulting remark, until at length with blazing eye and scowling face Cedric sprang to his feet, and said, 'There is one thing, my lord, that no Saxon would do, and that is to insult the guests whom he had invited to his table. Nor need Front-de-Bœuf, Malvoisin, or Bois-Guilbert, who have all recently been flung to the

ground by a Saxon lance, say much about Saxon skill and courage. Come, Athelstane,' he continued, 'up, and let us leave the place where, though guests, we have been insulted and abused. But before we go, let us try the loyalty of these boastful Normans. Let every man who is true to his rightful king fill his glass and drink to the health of King Richard of the Lion Heart, who, though a Norman, is a great man and a fine soldier.'

So saying, he filled his goblet with wine, raised it above his head, and shouting, 'To the King of England, Richard the Lion-hearted,' he drained it to the bottom, flung it on the table, and strode from the hall, followed by Athelstane and the other Saxon chiefs.

His action placed all present in a difficult position. To drink to the health of King Richard was to offend the usurper John, who had taken his place and done his best to keep him a captive. To refuse to drink to his health was openly to confess disloyalty and enmity to the terrible king who might at any moment return to claim his own, and at whose very name John trembled. A great number of the feasters tried to avoid the difficulty by hastily rising and leaving the table, thus causing the feast to end abruptly and in confusion.

CHAPTER 15

The Plot is hatched. Elsewhere the Black Knight makes merry with a Holy Hermit.

LATE that night the Norman captain Sir Maurice de Bracy might have been seen leaving the Castle of Ashby disguised in the dress of a Saxon forester—green tunic and hose, leather cap, girdle, and sandals, with a horn, short sword, and long-bow and arrows. He had just been plotting with the Templar, Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, against the liberty and happiness of the Lady

Rowena. These two worthies had finally arranged that on their second day's journey from Ashby, while passing through the domain of Front-de-Bœuf, the Saxons should be attacked by them and their men in the disguise of outlaws.

As soon as the Lady Rowena had been seized, and Cedric and Athelstane either killed, wounded, or bound, De Bracy was to hurry off, remove his disguise, and appear in his own dress at the head of some more of his men. He would then rescue the lady from the hands of the supposed outlaws, and take her as though for safety, rest, and recovery from fright, to the neighbouring castle of his friend, Front-de-Bœuf. There she should be kept a prisoner, never to be released save as the wife of De Bracy. Thus would the Norman secure a rich and beautiful bride without openly adopting the dangerous course of abducting her by force on the king's highway.

And why should the Templar be willing to take part in a somewhat dangerous plot to get a wealthy wife for another? As a Templar he was a monk and could not marry, so it could not be his intention to rescue Rowena once again, and marry her himself. Perhaps the fact that he had learnt from his servants that Isaac of York was likely to travel with Cedric's party had inclined him to take part in De Bracy's venture. A rich Jew safe in a Norman castle would be a very valuable prize to his captor, provided the captor was a brutal and heartless villain whose avarice was as great as his mercy was small.

While all these events were taking place, the knight whom the people had called the Black Sluggard, on account of his black armour and lazy behaviour, continued his peaceful way through the forest with the intention of reaching the great and famous city of York. The narrow winding paths, frequent cross-ways, and absence of houses, people, or sign-posts baffled him, however, and by the

second evening of his journey from Ashby he had completely lost himself. Wandering on in the darkness, he had just decided that he and his horse would have to spend the night in the forest without food or shelter, when he saw not far away a rude hut of logs and clay. Riding up to this poor and humble dwelling, the Black Knight struck the door a few blows with the butt or handle of his lance.

'Pass on, whoever you are,' said a deep, hoarse voice from within, 'and disturb not the prayers and meditations of a holy man of God.'

'Worthy father,' said the knight, 'here is a poor and hungry traveller, who gives you a chance of showing that you are indeed a man of good works and charity. Let me in and give me food and shelter, I pray you.'

'I have nothing here which a dog would eat,' was the inhospitable reply, 'nor a bed on which even a horse would lie, much less a man.'

'Well, let me be the judge of that,' said the knight, losing his temper, 'open the door before I beat it in.'

'If you talk of weapons,' said the monk, 'I can use weapons too, perhaps. Wait while I unfasten the door.'

A loud barking and fierce growling were then heard, and, as the door was opened, two huge and wild-looking dogs sprang out, followed by a stout, strong man armed with a thick cudgel. Although calling himself a 'holy man of God', professing to have no food or bed, and wearing the dress of a monk, the occupant of the hut looked very well-fed, cheerful, robust, and powerful.

'Since you are so poor,' said the knight, 'I do not quite see the need of these great dogs. Having nothing for them to protect, one might think you kept them to hunt the king's deer.'

'There are many rogues about,' replied the monk, with a look at the knight which seemed to say that he was probably one of them. 'The good keeper of this forest gave them to me for my safety.'

'Then for to-night your dog shall protect the two of us,' said the Black Knight. 'Where shall I put my horse? What shall I have for supper? And where shall I sleep?'



'Your horse can stand under a tree; you can have a handful of parched peas for your supper; and you can sleep on the ground,' was the reply.

The knight unsaddled his horse and threw his own cloak over it and, entering the hut, sat down on a log of wood by the rough table, on which the monk put a bowl of peas.

As he laid aside his helmet, the monk saw that his self-invited guest was a young and handsome man with curling yellow hair, blue eyes, fair moustache, a bold, daring look, and a general air of strength, courage, and determination.

The knight in his turn was struck by the athletic appearance of the monk. 'You do not look like a man who has lived for long on parched peas and cold water,' said he. 'You may be a hermit, as you say, but you look much more like a wrestler, an archer, or a soldier. What is your name?'

'I am called the Holy Hermit of Copmanhurst,' replied the monk, who was really the famous Friar Tuck, chaplain to the band of outlaws whose leader was the great Robin Hood, known in song and story and in actual history for over seven hundred years. Friar Tuck was a fat and jolly rogue, as hearty a fighter, drinker, eater, and robber as any member of the band to which he belonged and whose worthless priest he was.

'What is *your* name?' he continued.

'Oh, I am called the Black Sluggard, or I was called that at Ashby during the tournament,' was the answer.

'I see,' said the monk, with a smile. 'Neither of us shouts his real name from the house-tops. But as to my frugal fare, if you cannot eat it, I think the good keeper of this forest left some food in the cupboard for my benefit—but I don't eat such things as meat pies.'

'Good keeper!' said the knight, smiling. 'I *do* eat such things as meat pies. Bring it out, and just for once, see if you can swallow a little of such coarse and worldly food.'

With a grin the monk then opened a kind of hutch or cupboard, and produced a huge pie baked in a dish, a loaf of good bread, and a flask of wine.

After partly satisfying his keen hunger, the knight said to the monk (who was eating as fast and greedily

as himself), 'And when was the excellent keeper of this forest here last?'

'Oh, about two months ago,' was the answer.

'Really? Then this pie has kept remarkably fresh. If you had not told me, I should have thought that the buck from which this splendid venison came was running in the forest yesterday.'

'Of course—I meant yesterday—and this meat is mutton,' replied the monk. 'Do you think I would eat the king's deer? No, indeed, and if you hint at such a thing again, I will take my staff and fully prove to you that you are only here because I let you remain, and not because you are the stronger. Repress your curiosity, or I will give you a cure which will keep you free from that disease for a twelvemonth.'

'Well,' said the knight, 'I confess I now suffer badly from this disease of curiosity, so name your weapons, for I am sure so stout a monk as you, and one who cures curiosity, does not rely on a mere stick.'

'How would these suit you?' asked the monk, opening another cupboard and taking out a pair of good swords and a pair of shields. As he glanced up, the knight saw that the cupboard also held some long-bows, a cross-bow, arrows, spears, other weapons, and a harp.

'Why, there is the very weapon for us,' cried he, pointing to the harp. 'Come, let us have a match, and call the better singer the winner, if compete we must. I promise to ask no more impertinent questions.'

'As you will,' replied the hermit, and in turns they sang songs of joy and gladness of a kind fitter for the camps of soldiers than the cells of holy men. In the midst of their noisy carouse a loud knocking was heard at the door.

CHAPTER 16

The Plot succeeds.

WHEN Cedric the Saxon saw his son Wilfred of Ivanhoe drop senseless at the feet of the Lady Rowena, his first thought was to order his attendants to take him to the Saxons' quarters and to bear him thence to his home at Rotherwood as soon as he was strong enough for the journey.

He could not bring himself to forgive his disobedient son on the spot, but told Oswald, his cup-bearer, to watch over Wilfred and see that he was cared for.

When Oswald reached the gallery, however, he found he was too late. Wilfred had disappeared, leaving no trace but a pool of blood where he had fallen. Seeing Gurth, he asked him if he knew who had taken charge of their master's disinherited son. But Gurth knew nothing, and Oswald arrested him as a runaway, since he had left Cedric's service for that of Wilfred during the past few days, without leave asked or given.

All that Oswald could learn was that certain well-dressed grooms had placed Wilfred on a litter belonging to a lady and carried him away.

On hearing that his son was being cared for by some unknown person, Cedric's anxiety turned to anger that strangers should be doing for him the kindness and service which should rightly be given by his own relations.

'Let him go then,' he said roughly, 'and let those he fought for cure him. Why cannot he uphold his own Saxon ancestry, and fight with the weapons of his fathers, instead of juggling on horseback with these Norman lances?'

'If being the bravest, strongest, and noblest knight in the field is not upholding the honour of his ancestors,' said the Lady Rowena, 'I do not know what is.'

'Silence, Lady!' replied Cedric. 'I will hear no praise of this disobedient youth, and, as I have told you before, you

must put this idle and foolish attachment from your heart. Prepare now to attend the prince's banquet. I shall go there with the noble Athelstane to show these Normans that we are their equals in the hall as in the lists or on the battlefield. I will show them, too, how little I care for a disobedient son.'

'I shall not go there,' replied Rowena; 'and if you have no more heart than to go feasting while your son is dying, do not boast of it.'

He went, as has been seen, and it was during the bustle and confusion of his hurried departure from the castle that his eye first fell upon the deserter Gurth.

'Chain the dog,' he shouted; 'I will teach him to run away.' They then rode off, and taking the Lady Rowena with them, made their way to the monastery of St. Withold, not far away, where they were expected by the worthy Saxon abbot, and provided with supper, beds, and a hearty welcome. Next morning they started early and took the road for Rotherwood, which they hoped to reach before the following day.

At noon they halted for the midday meal on the borders of the great forest in which were the domains of Reginald Front-de Bœuf. As they proceeded on their way they were alarmed by cries for help, and, when they rode on to the spot whence they came, were surprised to find Isaac of York and his daughter Rebecca, with a horse-litter, deserted by their men, and left to their fate, unable to go on or back. On being questioned by Cedric, Isaac told them how the six soldiers whom he had hired at Ashby to escort him and his daughter had here run away, taking with them the horses which bore the litter containing a sick friend. (These six soldiers had done their work well, having been bribed by Brian de Bois-Guilbert to take the Jew and his party safely as far as the lands of Front-de-Bœuf and there desert them just before the arrival of Cedric and his followers. The Jew was to be Bois-Guilbert's

part of the booty when the mock outlaws captured the whole party and De Bracy rescued the Lady Rowena.)

Isaac was in the greatest terror at finding himself, his daughter, and the sick friend thus abandoned in the wild forest, at the mercy of outlaws, wolves, and—worse than either—the Norman barons of the neighbourhood.

He begged Cedric and Athelstane to have mercy on them and to allow them to join their party. This Athelstane would have refused, but the Lady Rowena was touched by the prayer of Rebecca, who said, 'It is not for ourselves so much as for our sick and wounded friend that I pray you to give us protection.' Cedric would have left them a couple of horses for the litter and two or three men, but Rowena said, 'The man is old and feeble, the girl is young and beautiful, their friend is sick and perhaps dying. Let them come with us. Two of the mules can be unloaded, and the baggage put on horses behind two of the servants. We have spare horses for the Jew and his daughter.' Cedric agreed, and the whole party shortly proceeded on its way. The path soon after grew so narrow that two horses could not go abreast, and led down into a narrow and swampy valley. Just as they were strung out into single file and were struggling through the mud, they were suddenly attacked in front and rear and on both flanks by a great band of what appeared to be outlaws. Cedric flung his spear at a man and pinned him to a tree, then, drawing his sword, spurred his horse forward and struck a violent blow at another. But the very violence of the blow spoilt it, for the sword struck a branch above Cedric's head and was dashed from his hand. A number of outlaws now sprang on Cedric, dragged him to the ground, and bound him hand and foot. The slow Athelstane was seized and bound before he could even draw his sword. The attendants were easily overcome by superior numbers and by the well-planned surprise that caught them in a long, straggling line. Only one of the party escaped besides Wamba,

who, after a brave fight and attempt to rescue his master, threw himself from his horse and escaped into the forest.

As he stood wondering what he should do next, a dog sprang up at him, and he saw that it was Fangs, who was quickly followed by his master Gurth.

‘What shall we do?’ cried the latter. ‘Shall we two make a sudden attack on them in turn and try to rescue Cedric?’

‘What can two do against so many?’ replied Wamba. ‘We must raise the alarm at Rotherwood first.’

As he spoke, a third person suddenly appeared and ordered them to halt. He was dressed in green, wore a silver belt and bugle, and carried a long-bow, arrows, and sword.

Wamba recognized the archer Locksley, who had defied Prince John and won his prize.

‘What is the meaning of this?’ he cried. ‘Who are these that rob and kill in this forest?’

‘Well, if you have a look at them,’ said Wamba, ‘you will find they are dressed very much like yourself, and seem to be a somewhat similar kind of people.’

‘I will see about that,’ replied Locksley, ‘and meanwhile remain where you are. Obey me, and it will be the better for your master and yourselves. But I must make myself as much like these rogues as possible.’ So saying, he unbuckled his silver belt and bugle, took the long feather from his cap, put over his face a mask which he carried in his pouch, and went off in the direction of the fight.

In a few minutes he returned. ‘My friends,’ said he, ‘I have found out who these rascals are, to whom they belong, and whither they are going. I do not think they will kill any of their prisoners. We three can do nothing by ourselves, but I believe I can get together a force of good fighting-men that will surprise them. Cedric is a good Saxon and a friend of the poor. The poor will now befriend him. Come with me until I gather my men.’ So saying he walked through the wood at a great pace.

'I think,' said Wamba, 'I saw this good archer shoot for a prize.'

'And I,' said Gurth, 'think he saw me use a quarter-staff one moonlight night. Then I thought he belonged to a robber-band himself.'

'Never mind who I am,' said Locksley; 'whether an archer, or an outlaw, or an honest man. If I can set your master free, you will think I am a good friend anyhow.'

'Our heads are in the lion's mouth now,' whispered Wamba to Gurth; 'I believe this is the famous leader of the great band of outlaws.'

'Then do not let us offend him,' replied Gurth, 'and all may yet be well.'

CHAPTER 17

Locksley gathers his party to the rescue.

AFTER some three hours' good walking the servants of Cedric with their mysterious guide reached a small opening in the forest, in the centre of which grew a huge oak-tree. Beneath this, four or five archers lay asleep, while another walked to and fro and kept watch. On hearing the sound of approaching feet, this sentry at once gave the alarm, and the sleepers, springing up, bent their bows and pointed their arrows at the three new-comers. As soon as Locksley spoke and was recognized, he was welcomed by the archers with all signs of the greatest respect.

'Where is the Miller?' he asked.

'On the Rotherham road with six men and good hope of booty,' was the reply.

'Where is Allan-a-dale?'

'Gone up towards the Watling Street to watch for the Prior of Jorvaulx.'

'And where is the Friar?'

'In his cell.'

'I shall go there now,' said Locksley. 'Disperse and seek your companions. Collect as many as you can, for there is big game to be hunted. Meet me here at daybreak. Two of you take the road to Torquilstone, the castle of Sir Reginald Front-de-Bœuf. A set of rogues dressed as outlaws have carried off a band of travellers and are taking them there. Watch them closely. Even if they reach the castle before we can catch them, we will teach them a lesson. Let them do their dirty work in their own dress and not in ours.'

They promised quick and full obedience and set off on their different errands.

Locksley, Wamba, and Gurth went on their way to the cell or hut of Friar Tuck, the 'holy hermit' of Copmanhurst.

When they reached the neighbourhood of the hut, they were surprised to hear coming from it the sounds of loud voices upraised in a drinking-song.

The hermit and the Black Sluggard within then heard the loud knocking referred to in an earlier chapter.

'Here,' said the monk, 'join me in singing a holy hymn in a loud voice, that the noise may cover the sounds made by my putting away the dishes and pots. If I am found in the act of giving a poor traveller like you a little food and drink, the rogues will be calling me a drunkard and glutton. All men have enemies, however pious they may be.'

'True,' replied the Black Knight, 'I have a few of my own, and before you open the door I'll get some of my armour on.'

As each set about his work, he raised his voice and bawled a hymn with the full power of his lungs.

'Stop that din, you mad monk, and open to Locksley,' cried a voice from without, and hastily informing the knight that all was well, and the intruder a friend, the monk unfastened and opened the door of his cell.

'Well, holy hermit, who is your companion?' asked Locksley as he entered.

'A poor and pious traveller, who has been praying with me all night,' was the reply.

'You must lay down your prayer-book and take up your quarter-staff and sword now,' said Locksley; 'we want every one of our merry men.' Turning to the Black Knight, he continued, 'I believe you are the good knight who took a part against the challengers at the tournament, and saved the Disinherited Knight when he was in danger of defeat.'

'Well, and if I was?' replied the Black Knight.

'Then I think you are the sort of man to stand up for the weaker side,' said Locksley.

'Well, and if I am?' inquired the Black Knight.

'Then,' replied Locksley, 'I think you will help us to rescue the good Saxon Cedric, his ward the Lady Rowena, and his friend Athelstane, from a band of villains who, in the disguise of better men than themselves, have carried them off to the castle of Torquilstone.'

'As a knight, I am bound to do all I can to help the oppressed, protect the weak, and punish the wicked,' said the Black Knight; 'but before joining you, I should like to know who you are.'

'I am a nameless man,' was the answer, 'but I am a friend of my country and of my country's friends.'

'I will help you,' said the Black Knight: 'your face is honest and your cause is good.'

Meanwhile Friar Tuck had dressed himself as an archer and bore quarter-staff and sword, a shield, and a bow and arrows.

'Come on,' said he; 'when I take off my monk's robe I am no longer a monk, and when I put on my archer's dress I am as good an archer as most. Where are these murderous villains?'

'We must collect all our forces first,' said Locksley, 'if we are going to storm the castle of Reginald Front-de-Bœuf.'

'What! is it Front-de-Bœuf?' asked the Black Knight. 'Has he turned thief and oppressor?'

'An oppressor he always was,' replied Locksley.

'And as to being a thief,' said the monk, 'he was never as honest a man as many a thief of my acquaintance.'

'Lead the way to the meeting-place,' said Locksley, and the party moved off into the forest.

CHAPTER 18

The prisoners are led to the Castle of Torquilstone.

MEANWHILE the armed men who had captured Cedric and his party wandered about with their captives, as if uncertain of the way through the forest to the castle in which they intended to imprison them.

'It is time now that you should leave us, Sir Maurice,' said Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert to De Bracy. 'You must go now, take off your disguise, and play the part of the gallant rescuer. We will offer but a faint resistance.'

'I have changed my mind,' said De Bracy. 'I shall not leave you until the prize is safe in Front-de-Bœuf's castle. There I shall confess to the Lady Rowena, and beg her to ascribe the violence of my action to the greatness of my love for her.'

'And what has made you change your mind, De Bracy?'

'That is my own business,' was the reply.

'I hope that it is not due to any suspicion of my honesty?' said Bois-Guilbert.

'Anyhow, I will run no risks,' answered De Bracy.

'How could there be any risks?' asked the other.

'Are not we Knights of the Temple bound by our oaths and the laws of our Order never to marry? I am not likely to try to marry your Lady Rowena.'

'I know all about your oaths and your rules,' was the reply, 'and I know how they are kept.'

'Well, hear the truth then,' said Bois-Guilbert. 'I care

nothing for the Saxon maiden ; but there is another among the captives as lovely and more wealthy. I would wed the Jewish Rebecca, daughter of old Isaac of York.'

'I thought you just said you cannot marry,' answered De Bracy.

'Oh, it might not be a very binding marriage,' was the reply, 'and in any case a man who has fought for the Church, as I have, can expect a little liberty. Is a Knight Templar who has slain three hundred enemies of Christendom to be brought to account for every little failing as though he were a village girl ?'

'Well, you know your own business best,' said De Bracy, 'and I know mine. Part of my business will be to keep a tight hold on my prize, now that I have won it. You are a little too changeable in your views and too easy in your conscience for me to trust you. But as a matter of fact I should have thought that the seizing of the old Jew's money-bags would have interested you far more than marrying his daughter.'

'Perhaps I may seize both,' answered the Templar.

Meanwhile Cedric the Saxon did not cease to reproach the guards who hurried him along and whom he supposed to be outlaws. 'Do you call yourselves Saxons,' asked he, 'that you attack a Saxon who has always befriended and protected poor Saxon outlaws—the victims of Norman cruelty and oppression ?' But he got no reply from the followers of Bois-Guilbert and De Bracy, who had been forbidden to speak to their captives, and who were anxious to find themselves safe in the castle of Torquilstone before a rescue could be attempted by the friends of Cedric and Athelstane, should they hear of this outrage.

At length the guides of the supposed outlaws seemed to find the required path, and, after they had travelled along it for some time, the castle of Torquilstone came in view.

Though not one of the greatest baronial castles, it was a strong fortress consisting of a large and high square

tower surrounded by lesser buildings, which were enclosed by an inner courtyard and wall. Around the outer wall, which was thick enough for a carriage to be driven along its top, was a deep and wide ditch or moat filled with water supplied by a neighbouring rivulet. The only entrance to the castle was by means of a narrow drawbridge, which could be raised and lowered at will.

As soon as Cedric saw the turrets of Front-de-Bœuf's castle raise their grey and moss-grown battlements above the trees, he at once understood the whole affair, and turning to his guards said, 'I did injustice to the robbers and outlaws of these woods in thinking that they would waylay a Saxon. Tell me, you dogs, is it my money or my life that your thieving master aims at?' But the men remained as dumb as before.

As they reached the castle, De Bracy blew three notes upon his horn, and the sentinels at the main gateway hastened to lower the drawbridge that the party might cross the moat. In the courtyard, the prisoners were made to dismount, and were then led into three or four separate apartments in different quarters of the castle. Resistance was useless, there being a dozen armed men to each of the unarmed Saxons.

On being separated from his daughter, Isaac the Jew burst into tears and loud prayers that she might be allowed to accompany him, but the only result was the remark from an attendant, 'Wait till you see your chamber, dog, and you will be thankful to our lord that your daughter is *not* with you.' The Lady Rowena was put by herself, without any maidservant, in one chamber, Rebecca into a different one, Cedric and Athelstane into a third; and the wretched Isaac was dragged off to the lowest dungeon beneath the castle. The Saxon servants and attendants were searched, disarmed, and locked up in a guard-house.

As Cedric and Athelstane paced up and down their prison-room in anger, the door opened and servants entered,

bearing a table on which was food. Later they returned to remove the remains of the meal.

'Tell your master,' said Cedric to them, 'that we know quite well where we are and who is the author of this villany. Tell him that, since we must, we will pay a fair ransom for our liberty.'

'And tell him,' added Athelstane, 'that if he is not a coward, he will meet me in fair fight on foot or on horseback within eight days. If he calls himself a knight, let him neither refuse nor delay.'

As he spoke, a trumpet was blown three times and with great violence outside the castle. There was a note of proud defiance in the very sound of it.

CHAPTER 19

Front-de-Bœuf and the Jew in the dungeon.

MEANWHILE Isaac of York lay shivering in his horrible and gloomy dungeon. From the damp and slimy walls hung great rusty chains, which had held former captives. In one corner lay human bones, and rats ran across the wet and filthy floor. At the end was a huge rusty fireplace over which was fastened a large grating of transverse iron bars. The unfortunate Jew knew too well that he was in the torture-chamber of a brutal and avaricious noble, and that the fireplace and grating before him were nothing else than the means of actually *roasting* into obedience such as crossed the will of the savage tyrant who owned the castle.

As he cowered there in fear and agony of mind, the rusty bolts of the door screamed, the hinges creaked, and it opened, admitting Reginald Front-de-Bœuf and two of his followers.

Front-de-Bœuf was a tall and strong man, whose life had been spent in fighting at home and abroad. In character he was violent, brutal, and ferocious; and his face was the index of his character. What he dared to do he

did, and any crime which he did not commit was left undone for no reason of conscience or honour. This cruel and dangerous tyrant—to whom the weak rule of John had added strength—governed the country-side by terror, with his own desires for his law, and his torture-chamber for his court of justice.

On this occasion he was dressed in leather tunic and hose stained and frayed by his armour. He wore no weapons but a dagger that hung from a belt, which also bore a great bunch of keys. His two followers, dressed only in their trousers and vests with sleeves tucked up, had the air of butchers about to perform their functions of the slaughter-house. Each carried a basket.

Having fastened the door, one of them produced a pair of scales and some weights.

‘Dog,’ said Front-de-Bœuf to the trembling Isaac, ‘do you see these scales? In them you shall weigh me out a thousand pounds of silver!’

‘Holy Abraham!’ said Isaac, ‘who ever in this world saw or heard of such a vast mass of silver?’

‘Well,’ said Front-de-Bœuf, with an evil grin, ‘I am a very reasonable man. An equal value in gold will do just as well. Find it, and save your body from such punishment as your mind cannot conceive.’

‘Have mercy on me, noble knight!’ cried Isaac, ‘I am old and needy and helpless. It is a poor triumph to crush a worm.’

‘Old you may be,’ replied the knight, ‘and more shame to those who have let such a vile usurer grow old. Feeble you may be, for who ever heard of a Jew that was brave and strong? But poor you are not—not *yet* at least.’

‘I swear to you, noble knight,’ answered the Jew, ‘that I have no money.’

‘Look you, Jew!’ said Front-de-Bœuf, ‘men a thousand times more important than you have met their end in this dungeon, and no one has ever known what became

of them. This dungeon is no place for trifling. Agree to furnish the money at once, or, before long, death will be the one thing you want and cannot have.'

He made a signal to the two attendants, who speedily made a fire in the great fireplace with straw, oil, wood, and charcoal. A pair of bellows quickly turned the fire into a glowing furnace.

'Do you see the comfortable couch of iron bars just above my little fire, Isaac?' asked Front-de-Bœuf. 'Defy me another minute, and on that couch you shall lie stripped of your clothes. You shall be well waited on too. One of my slaves shall see that your fire does not die down, while the other shall anoint your limbs with oil lest you burn. Now make up your mind, and pay or roast.'

It was not until the servants of the knight actually seized him and commenced to tear off his cloak, that Isaac gave way and said sullenly, 'Since I must, I must. With the help of my brethren I will raise this most monstrous sum. When and where must it be delivered?'

'Here,' answered Front-de-Bœuf, 'here, on the floor of this very dungeon.'

'And how do I know that I shall be set free when the money is paid?' asked the Jew.

'You have my word for that,' was the reply.

'And why should I trust your word when you will not trust mine?' asked Isaac.

'Because you have no help for it,' answered the knight.

'Then grant me my liberty and that of my companions, and I will go to York for the money. The Saxons helped me—and besides they may help with this ransom.'

'Mind your own concerns, and do not meddle with those of the Saxons,' was the answer. 'They are the business of my friends, and will have enough to do to provide their own ransoms.'

'Then only I and my wounded friend are to be set free at first, to get the money?' asked Isaac.

'Shall I tell you once again to mind only your own concerns?' said Front-de-Bœuf. 'No one will go free until the money is paid to the last ounce.'



'But how then shall I be able to raise the sum?' replied the Jew. 'At least let my daughter go with a letter——'

'Your *daughter*!' said the knight in surprise, 'I thought that black-haired girl was a servant, and I gave her to

Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, as he was graciously pleased to admire her and say he wished to make her his wife.'

With a shriek of rage and horror Isaac leapt to his feet. 'Give my daughter in marriage to that brutal ruffian! Robber and villain, not one farthing do you have from me until she is free and unhurt. Burn me alive! Cut me in pieces! and the only silver you should have from me would be any I could pour molten down your vile throat.'

'Are you mad, you dog?' shouted Front-de-Bœuf. 'Have you a charm against boiling oil and red-hot iron?'

'I care nothing for your tortures,' screamed Isaac in reply. 'Give me my daughter unhurt, and take your money. Let one hair of her head be injured, and not an ounce of silver do you get from me though you torture me for a year.'

'We will see about that, good Isaac,' answered the knight. 'Chain him down upon the iron bars, and we shall hear a change of tune perhaps.'

At this moment the trumpet blown so loudly without the castle sent its tones of defiance and challenge to the ears of Front-de-Bœuf.

Bidding his men stay their hands until his return, he hurried up the stairs from the dungeon to the castle hall.

CHAPTER 20

De Bracy is rebuffed by the Lady Rowena.

WHILE Reginald Front-de-Bœuf had been dealing with his share of the booty, Maurice de Bracy and Brian de Bois-Guilbert had been similarly employed, if in gentler fashion. Upon the arrival of the captives, Front-de-Bœuf had at once claimed the Jew and his coffers as the price of the loan of his castle. 'I am not going to stir up strife with all the Saxons of these parts for nothing,' he had said, 'and if you want to drag me into the plot you will have to pay

me, or let the Jew do so. De Bracy gets a rich Saxon wife, Bois-Guilbert a rich Jewess, and I get old Isaac's money-bags—or out you go, captives and all.' And this division of the spoil had been agreed upon.

The room in which the Lady Rowena had been shut was the best furnished apartment of the castle, having been, in her lifetime, the room of Front-de-Bœuf's wife. It had been long neglected, however; the tapestry and hangings were frayed, faded, and torn; the furniture was old and worm-eaten, and everything had a tarnished and neglected air. Yet the fact of her having been put in this room was in itself a kind of honour and a sign that no harm was intended.

She had not been long in the somewhat desolate chamber before Sir Maurice de Bracy entered, and with a low bow begged the Lady Rowena to be seated. De Bracy had cast aside his outlaw's disguise and was now dressed in the costly velvet, silk, and fur of a Norman noble, and in the latest French fashion.

Looking at him with a haughty and angry glance, Lady Rowena refused to sit. 'If I am in the presence of a gaoler,' said she, 'I should, as a prisoner, remain standing to hear my doom. Were you a gentleman, it would be different of course.'

'Alas! fair Rowena,' returned De Bracy. 'You are in the presence of your captive—not your gaoler. It is from you that I must hear my doom.'

'I do not know you, nor what you mean,' replied the lady, 'and your impudence seems little excuse for your violence.'

'I mean that your beauty has made me your slave,' was the reply.

'Are you a knight,' asked Rowena, 'or are you a common thief and robber?'

'My name is Sir Maurice de Bracy,' was the answer, 'and though the name may not be known to you, it is very

well known to the heralds and minstrels and those who sing of deeds of arms, valour, and honour.'

'Then they can sing of one more brave deed of arms, valour, and honour,' said Rowena, 'and tell how the brave De Bracy with his bold men-at-arms had the courage to attack a few harmless travellers and, like a brave and true Norman knight, to carry off a woman.'

'You are unjust,' said De Bracy. 'It was because I love you and desire you for my wife that I disguised myself as a rough outlaw and carried you off. My wooing was rude and violent, but my affection is equally violent. Forgive the one for the other.'

'Surely you put on a disguise when you took off the dress of the rough outlaw,' was the answer. 'Are you not a vulgar robber disguised now as a gentleman and a knight?'

'I am a Norman noble,' replied De Bracy, 'and I do you a great honour when I offer to marry you. And know this—you shall never leave this castle but as my wife. Rejoice at the advancement, and humbly kiss the hand that takes you from a lowly Saxon homestead where you herd with Saxon swine, and places you beside one of the rulers of the land.'

'The Saxon homestead has sheltered me from infancy, and when I leave it, it will be with one who does not despise it and does not call my people "swine".'

'I guess your meaning,' said De Bracy, 'but you are wrong. You think that Wilfred of Ivanhoe will come to wealth and power when Richard the Lion Heart returns to England. Do you think I could be jealous of such a rival? And do you not know that at this moment he lies wounded and in my power in this very castle?'

'Wilfred here!' cried Rowena. 'I think you are as truthful as you are brave and honourable.'

'Did you not know it?' replied De Bracy. 'He was the wounded man borne in the horse-litter by Isaac of York

and his daughter. They carried him from the lists when his own people left him to bleed to death. He is here and in my power. Do you think that Bois-Guilbert and Front-de-Bœuf, whom he defied and overthrew, will take great care of him? Will he live long when they know who he is?’

‘Save him, save him!’ cried Rowena, turning as pale as death.

‘And your guardian Cedric, shall I save him too?’ asked De Bracy.

As he said these words, he too heard the challenge of the trumpet without—clearly the voice of an enemy. Turning to leave the chamber, he said;

‘It is not for me to save them, lady. Their lives are in *your* hands. When you consent to marry me, they will go free. Should you again refuse; I do not think their lives will be very long or merry.’

CHAPTER 21

How Rebecca outwitted Bois-Guilbert.

WHILE De Bracy was urging his suit upon the Lady Rowena in the best chamber the castle boasted, Brian de Bois-Guilbert, in the topmost room of the high tower, was trying to persuade the Jewess Rebecca of his honest desire and ability to marry her. The fact that it was in this room, high up above the courtyard, that she had been imprisoned, proved Rebecca’s salvation, and enabled her to speak on equal terms with her captor and to refuse his offer of marriage.

When first thrust into the room, she had hastily looked round for means of escape, but the chamber contained no door save the one by which she had been brought in. This was barred and bolted on the outside and could not be fastened from within. The unglazed window, a high, narrow opening in the thick wall, overhung the courtyard

far below. At this dizzy height people walking to and fro looked more like ants than men. Looking down, she felt giddy at the sight and the thought of the terrible drop, and drew back into the room.

As she did so, the door opened, and Brian de Bois-Guilbert in the dress of an outlaw entered the room.

Taking her jewelled gold bracelets from her arms and a gold chain from her neck, she held them out to the supposed outlaw, saying, as she did so, 'Take these, and for the love of God be merciful to me and my aged father. These articles are of value, but they are as nothing to the reward he will bestow upon you if you can help us to escape uninjured from this castle.'

'These pearls are less white than your teeth, and these diamonds less bright than your eyes,' was the reply. 'I do not want to take jewels from you but to give you more, Rebecca. I do not want your father's gold, but his daughter as my wife.'

'You are no outlaw,' cried the Jewess. 'Who are you—a Norman noble? If you are a noble, *be noble*; and set me and my father free.'

'I am a Knight Templar,' said Bois-Guilbert, 'and seldom was one of your despised race so honoured as are you by my offer. I am not the least among the high and noble members of my great Order, and the lady who is my wife may live to find herself sitting in the seats of the mighty—if not on a throne. Come, change your religion, embrace mine, turn from Jew to Christian, marry me, and I will dazzle your eyes with glory and magnificence.'

'Do you think that they are weak and dazzled already?' replied Rebecca. 'Change my religion! Turn from Jew to Christian! Marry *you*! Are you mad, or do you think that I am mad?'

'Whatever you are, you are in my power—and you shall be my wife,' said Bois-Guilbert and took a step in her direction. As he did so, Rebecca suddenly sprang into the

window-hole, which was a foot above the ground, high enough for her to stand in, and wide enough for her to leap through.

Standing in the aperture with her feet on the very edge, she cried, 'Advance another step, and I will cast myself down into the courtyard below, and be dashed to pieces. I should prefer that awful death a thousand times to the far more awful fate of becoming the wife of such a brute as you. There is little need for me to change my religion, thanks to the man that built this tower so high.'

'Come down, Rebecca, come down. I would not hurt you,' shouted Bois-Guilbert.

'Leave this chamber instantly, or I leap,' replied the brave girl.

Retreating to the door, Bois-Guilbert turned and said, 'Rebecca, I have broken all the laws there are—but my word I have never broken. I solemnly swear I will do you no hurt if you come down. Trust me.'

'I will trust you at this distance,' replied Rebecca. 'Take one step towards me, and I will take a step backwards into the abyss.'

'Rebecca,' said the knight, now moved as much with admiration for the girl's spirit and courage as he had been by her beauty, 'a soul like yours is a fit mate for mine. Be my wife and I will treat you with the highest honour, show you the truest affection, and give you the greatest freedom. May my crest be taken from me and my name dishonoured, if I do not treat you thus. Think, too. Your father is in this castle and in the power of Front-de-Bœuf. He will need a strong friend, if he is to escape from it unhurt. Forgive me, agree to marry me, and I will save him.'

'I do not trust you, Templar,' replied Rebecca. 'You could easily get rid of a wife, even if you obtained the permission of the head of your Order to marry. If you could do this with a Christian, how much more easily could you do it with a despised Jewess.'

'You do me injustice,' said Bois-Guilbert, 'I swear to you by all that I hold most sacred that I would never part from you. Rebecca! you *must* be my wife. Hear me before you answer, and judge well before you refuse. I am more than a mere Templar. I shall one day be the Grand Master of the Order of Knights Templars. I am ambitious, and I will lead our army to the conquest of a kingdom, and I will set a royal crown upon your brows.—That trumpet means that I must leave you now. Think on what I have said, and believe that I am in earnest.' So saying, he left the chamber and descended to see what the loud bugle-summons might mean.

CHAPTER 22

Locksley and his party outside the Castle.

IN the great hall of the castle, Bois-Guilbert, De Bracy, and Front-de-Bœuf met.

'What is the meaning of this clamour?' asked Bois-Guilbert. 'Is it the King of France at the head of an army?'

'Read this,' said Front-de-Bœuf, throwing a letter on the table; 'it has just been brought to me from the fellow with the trumpet.'

'It is the most extraordinary challenge ever sent to a Norman noble, unless it is a fooling joke,' said Bois-Guilbert, reading it.

'Joke!' replied Front-de-Bœuf, 'it is a brave and rash man that jokes with me. Read it out.'

Bois-Guilbert then read aloud the following curious letter.

'I, Wamba, the son of Witless, a jester, and Gurth, the son of Beowulf, a swineherd, with our good friends, the knight called the Black Sluggard and the archer called Locksley, accuse you, Reginald Front-de-Bœuf, and your

allies, of having seized our noble master Cedric, Athelstane of Coningsburgh, the Lady Rowena, Isaac of York and his daughter Rebecca, and several attendants and followers, when travelling peaceably on the king's highway. We also order you to set them all free within one hour, or we will attack and destroy your castle and yourselves.'

The knights heard this amazing letter from end to end with the utmost astonishment. De Bracy was the first to break the silence which followed, by bursting into a fit of loud laughter.

'It may be very amusing, De Bracy,' said Front-de-Bœuf, 'but it is a pity you can't bear the whole brunt of it yourself, since you find it so laughable. These rogues would not have dared to write this unless they had got together a strong force of outlaws, robbers, men-at-arms and followers of these Saxons. Your plot may cost us all dearly yet.'

'There are at least two hundred fighting-men gathered in the woods,' said the sentinel who had brought in the letter.

'Two hundred insects without stings,' said De Bracy.

'Stingless!' said Front-de-Bœuf. 'What do you call arrows a yard long?'

'For shame!'' said Bois-Guilbert. 'Are three knights and their soldiers to fear a handful of timid villagers? Let us go out—they will flee at the sight of us.'

'Go out and try then,' replied Front-de-Bœuf. 'You have been in France and other foreign parts too long. Timid villagers! You will soon see what kind of timid villagers are these. They are English archers, and if they get within shot of you, will fill you as full of arrows as a target at a shooting-match.'

'Do you fear then that they are in sufficient strength to attack the castle?'

'No. They have no leaders, no scaling-ladders, and no battering-rams. But as for going out to scatter them—we have scarcely enough men to guard the walls. My

men are still at York and so are yours : there are not twenty men in the place, thanks to the tournament.'

'Send to your neighbours, then,' said Bois-Guilbert, 'and ask them to come with their men to the rescue of three Norman knights besieged in their castle by a jester and a swineherd !'

'And two hundred archers,' said Front-de-Bœuf. 'You may make a jest of it, but we shall see. Nor do I know to whom we could send. Malvoisin is still at York with the prince, and so are my other friends. Besides, would these rascals let any messenger leave the castle, if one were sent ? However, we will try,' and he wrote the following letter :—

'Sir Reginald Front-de-Bœuf with his noble and knightly friends and allies takes no notice of servants, outlaws, and runaways. If the man who calls himself the Black Knight has any claim to be a gentleman, he ought to know that he should not be in the company of such people, and that while he is, he cannot expect to be listened to by men of noble birth. As to the prisoners in this castle, a priest should be sent to prepare them for death, for to-day they shall die. This will show all rogues how easy it is to rescue the prisoners of noblemen.'

This letter was given to the messenger who had brought the message of Gurth, Wamba, the Black Sluggard, and their friends, and he returned to the place in the forest, close to the castle, where Locksley, the monk called Friar Tuck, and the rest were waiting with a large band of Locksley's outlaws and Saxon yeomen (or farmers) who had been gathered together during the night. These men were armed with the deadly long-bow and arrows, and most of those who had not swords had boar-spears, flails, scythes, pitchforks, or quarter-staves. The letter was read aloud to the leaders of this little army by the Black Knight, and then explained in Saxon to such as could not understand the Norman-French in which it was written.

'Execute the noble Cedric!' cried Wamba. 'You must be mistaken, noble sir. No man dare do such a deed as that.'

'No, my friend,' replied the Black Knight, 'it is written here that the prisoners shall die to-day.'

'Then we will capture the castle if we have to tear it down with our hands by pulling stone from stone!' cried Gurth.

'They only say this to gain time,' said Locksley. 'They dare not do a thing for which I would inflict a fearful punishment when I caught them alone in these forests.'

'I wish one of us could get into the castle,' said the Black Knight. 'I wonder if anybody could do so in the dress of a priest. They ask for a priest to pray with the prisoners who are about to die. The worthy Friar Tuck might go, I think. He is a priest—of a sort.'

'Not I,' replied the monk. 'I tell you, Sir Knight, that when I put off my priest's dress, I put off my holiness, and when I put on an archer's dress, I become an archer. I am no priest at the present time.'

'Then I fear there is no one here who could play the part and not be found out,' said the Black Knight.

'Well,' said Wamba in reply, 'I suppose the fool must be fool enough to run the risk. I was educated as a monk until I had brain fever and went nearly mad. The illness left me with only just sense enough to be a fool, but if you give me Friar Tuck's priestly robe, I can perhaps pass as a priest and get Cedric out in my disguise.'

'Do so then, good fellow,' answered the Black Knight, 'and see if you can let us know how many men they have got in the castle and how they are placed, even if you cannot rescue Cedric. Any information as to their weak places may give us the victory.'

'And tell these tyrants,' added Locksley, 'that I and my men will keep so close a watch upon them if they kill any of their prisoners, that whenever they may try to

leave the castle I will fill them with arrows. I will have vengeance for Cedric, if I cannot save him, and whatever he may suffer shall be doubly repaid to them.'

Wamba, who had put on the monk's robe and pulled the cowl or hood over his face, now set forth on his dangerous errand.

CHAPTER 23

The Jester's ruse. Wamba and Cedric change places.

WHEN Wamba the Jester, dressed in the cowl and robe of the hermit, with his knotted cord twisted round his waist, reached the door of the castle, the warder demanded his name and business.

'Peace be with you, my son,' replied Wamba in a solemn voice; 'I am a poor monk of the order of St. Francis come to pray with some unhappy prisoners.'

'You are a bold friar,' said the warder, 'to come where a priest has not set foot for twenty years.'

'Yet I think that your lord will make me welcome.'

'Stand where you are till I return, then, unless you want an arrow through your gown,' replied the man, as he went off to tell his master that a monk sought admission to the castle. With no little surprise he received his master's orders to admit him, and obeyed them.

In the presence of the fierce and brutal Front-de-Bœuf, Wamba's courage began to fail, and he trembled with fear.

But the baron was too accustomed to seeing men tremble before him to suspect that the man was fearful of discovery.

'Who are you, priest, and whence come you?' said he.

'Peace be with you; I am a poor friar caught by outlaws and sent here to pray for some of their friends whom your honour is about to put to death,' replied Wamba.

'Very good. And how many of these rascally thieves are there in the forest?' asked Front-de-Bœuf.

'There are very many of them, well armed, fierce, and strong,' said Wamba.

'I asked you *how many*,' shouted Front-de-Bœuf.

'I was too frightened of them to notice much, but there were five hundred at the very least,' replied Wamba.

'What!' cried Brian de Bois-Guilbert, 'five hundred!' and taking Front-de-Bœuf aside, 'Let this priest carry a sealed letter to De Bracy's company of men-at-arms, ordering them to come at once to their master's help. While it is being written, let the fellow go and pray with the Saxon prisoners, so that he may suspect nothing of our weakness.'

Front-de-Bœuf agreed, and Wamba was taken to the apartment in which Cedric and Athelstane were imprisoned.

'Peace be with you,' said Wamba, as the door was opened.

'Come in,' replied Cedric. 'What do you want with us?'

'To bid you prepare yourselves for death,' answered the supposed priest.

'Impossible!' said Cedric, starting. 'Wicked villains as they are, they dare not murder us.'

'Alas!' replied the jester, 'to hold them by their sense of justice and right is like trying to hold a runaway horse by a silken thread. Let us pray.'

'Do you hear this, Athelstane?' cried Cedric. 'Let us make up our minds to die like men, and to die fighting, if we have a chance.'

'Let us prepare for death then, holy father,' continued he, turning to the priest.

'One moment, Uncle,' said Wamba, throwing back the hood that had hitherto concealed his face. 'Take a good look before you leap in the dark.'

'Wamba the Fool!' cried Cedric in surprise.

'Yes, Uncle,' replied the jester, with a grin. 'If you had taken a fool's advice, you wouldn't be here now, and if you take a fool's advice now, you won't be here long.'

'What do you mean?' asked his master.

'Why, this. Take my cloak, gown, hood, girdle, and all, and go out in my place with the hood well over your face. I will remain here,' answered Wamba.

'Remain here! Why, they would hang you, my good fellow,' said his master.

'Well, a man can hang as neatly as his master, I hope?' was the answer.

'I will not accept your brave and noble offer. But if you will let the Lord Athelstane go in my place, I will consent to your doing it,' said Cedric.

'No!' replied Wamba; 'I will suffer for my master, but for no one else.'

'Let the old tree wither,' begged Cedric, 'and let the young and stately hope of the forest be saved. You and I will die, and let this son of kings go free, and he will avenge us.'

'Not I, father Cedric,' cried Athelstane at this point. 'Do you think I would let this good fellow die for me when he has risked his life already to offer it to you? No, no.'

'I will hang for no man but my master,' repeated Wamba.

'Go, then, Cedric,' said Athelstane. 'Outside you may help us, here you can do nothing.'

'Have we any friends at hand?' asked Cedric.

'Five hundred close by in the woods, and I was one of their noble leaders this morning,' replied Wamba.

'I will go then,' said Cedric, 'but only in the hope of being able to save the whole party. Were it not that I trust I shall be able to effect a rescue, I would not let you run this risk, my faithful servant. This shall not be forgotten if we escape.'

So saying, he took the friar's dress from Wamba and so arranged it that the cowl almost completely covered his face.

'Say "Peace be with you" to everybody, and no one will guess you are not as good a priest as any,' said Wamba.

'Farewell, noble Cedric,' said Athelstane; 'good luck go with you.'

‘Farewell, Uncle,’ added Wamba, ‘and don’t forget “Peace be with you”.’

Nor did Cedric go far without having cause to use this password and proof of genuineness. In a low and dark passage, along which he was making his way towards the hall, a woman stopped him.

‘Peace be with you,’ said the supposed friar.

‘And with you, holy father,’ was the reply. ‘I beg of you to come with me and visit a wounded man who lies sick and badly in need of your comfort and prayers. Your monastery shall benefit richly, if you grant my request.’

‘I cannot stay,’ replied the false priest. ‘Great need is there for haste. It is a matter of life and death that calls me from the castle.’

‘Let me beseech you first to help the sick and dying,’ begged the woman, as she clutched at his gown.

Uttering a hasty exclamation of anger and impatience, Cedric was about to push past the kneeling female form, when a harsh voice from behind cried,

‘What do you here, Jewess? Cease to hinder the holy priest, and get back to the wounded man. Is this your return for my kindness in letting you leave your cell to nurse him?’

Turning, Cedric beheld an old and ugly hag, with worn and untidy dress, loose hair, and a wild and evil look.

‘A Jewess!’ cried he, in pretended anger. ‘How dare a Jewess touch a holy priest fresh from his pious work of prayer and preparation for death? Let me pass, and pollute me not by your touch.’

‘Come this way, holy father,’ said the old woman, ‘and I will lead you out.’

Rebecca retreated and returned to the room in which the wounded man lay, and to which she had been brought by the old hag when Bois-Guilbert left her cell. Cedric followed the new-comer, who led him into a small chamber and fastened the door.

'You are a Saxon,' said she, 'and Saxon words are sweet to my ear.'

'There are many Saxon priests,' replied he.

'You are the first that has entered this castle for ten years,' continued the woman, 'and you must hear my tale. I cannot die with it untold, and to-day I shall meet death—and others too, if all go as I have planned. Look at me! I am Ulrica of Torquilstone, all that is left of the once noble and beautiful Lady Ulrica, daughter of the great Saxon lord of Torquilstone.'

'You!' cried Cedric, unable to believe his ears, 'you, daughter of Torquil Wolfgang, the noblethane of Torquilstone! You—you—the daughter of my dear old friend and fellow soldier! Ulrica was slain twenty years ago when this vile Front-de-Bœuf captured his castle by treachery and slew him and every soul in it down to the youngest babe that bore his name!'

'I am Ulrica,' replied the woman, 'and if you were my father's old friend and companion in arms, you must be Cedric of Rotherwood. Why are you in this priestly garb? Have you turned monk and given up the world in disgust?'

'I am Cedric of Rotherwood,' was the answer, 'but how can you be Ulrica of Torquilstone. Had I known that you lived and were in the power of this wretch, I would have neither eaten nor drunk, slept nor rested, until I had slain him.'

'I have been his prisoner from that fatal day when I lost every relative on earth,' said Ulrica, 'and have never been outside his castle from the moment I was dragged into it. I am now a wretched menial, a despised slave, a miserable and hideous hag—who was once the proud and beautiful Ulrica of Torquilstone. For years I have waited for vengeance, and to-day vengeance is mine, if the men without will attack the castle boldly. Go forth and lead them on, fight fiercely, and be sure of such help as you little dream of. Press hardest when you see a red flag on the eastern

angle of the tower. Go, leave me to my fate, which to-day will come upon me.'

As she spoke, the voice of Front-de-Bœuf was heard roaring, 'Where is this lazy priest? I will soon make a holy martyr of him, if I catch him talking treason to my servants.'

As he climbed the stair, Ulrica led Cedric forth and disappeared.

'Have you done your work?' inquired Front-de-Bœuf, as Cedric approached.

'I have prepared them for what will follow,' replied Cedric.

'Then come with me,' said the Norman, 'and I will dismiss you by a small side-door and give you your orders.'

Leading him to where a tiny door opened on to a single plank crossing the moat, Front-de-Bœuf said,

'In yonder woods are hundreds of Saxon rogues, outlaws, and vermin, who dare to threaten me. Take this letter to the castle of Sir Philip de Malvoisin, and ask him to send a swift horseman to York with it, as I am besieged. As you pass through these Saxon dogs tell them some tale of our weakness that will keep them here until De Bracy's men-at-arms arrive from York. I would not have them flee before the troop arrives.'

'Not a Saxon shall leave this spot before you wish it!' said Cedric.

'Begone then,' was the reply, 'serve me well, and when you return here you shall have enough wine for you to swim in.'

'Certainly I shall return,' answered Cedric, as he crossed the plank and disappeared into the forest.

CHAPTER 24

The Storm-cloud gathers round the Castle.

FRONT-DE-BŒUF returned to the hall of his castle. 'Ho! Giles the jailer,' he cried. 'Let them bring Cedric and the other Saxon dog before me. I will have some talk with them on the subject of ransom.'

His command was obeyed, and Athelstane and Wamba were led into the hall. Owing to the dim light and the way in which the jester wore his master's cap and hung his head, the Norman baron did not notice that the second of the two prisoners was not Cedric.

'Well,' said he, with an evil grin, 'how are you enjoying your stay at Torquilstone? You are paying this visit because you cut short your visit to Prince John. Insolent dogs! You shall pay dearly for insulting a Norman prince, or you shall hang by the feet from the tower of this castle until the crows have picked the flesh from your bones. What sum are you prepared to pay if I spare your worthless lives, you dogs?'

'Nothing,' replied Wamba. 'My brain has always been upside down, and if you hang me by the heels, perhaps it will come right, and I shall be a wise man again—like you.'

'Good Heaven! What have we here?' cried Front-de-Bœuf, leaping up and striking the cap from Wamba's head. 'Giles, Clement, you dogs and rogues, what have you brought me here? Did I not send you for Cedric of Rotherwood and the other Saxon hog, Athelstane?'

'I know the fellow,' said De Bracy, who entered at that minute, 'it is the jester of Cedric—the man who knocked Isaac the Jew down the steps of the gallery in the lists at Ashby.'

'Well, I'll settle their quarrel once for all by hanging him and the Jew on the same gallows,' was the answer. 'Go quickly,' he continued, turning to Giles the jailer, 'and

bring me the Saxon Cedric. I will pardon your error this time—it was natural to mistake a fool for a Saxon thane.'

The men looked guilty and afraid, muttering that if this were not Cedric they knew nothing of him.

'Holy Saints! He must have escaped in the dress of the monk,' said De Bracy.

'Then it was the rascal Cedric himself whom I let out at the postern gate and to whom I gave the letter for your men-at-arms at York,' cried Front-de-Bœuf. 'And you, jester, I'll show you the other side of the jest. Take the dog to the top of the tower, shave his head by tearing the scalp from it, and then fling him over the walls.' Turning to Athelstane, he continued, 'What do you offer for your life, if I let you go, on your promising to take away this band of Saxon swine that dare to pretend to besiege my castle?'

'I will pay a ransom of a thousand pieces of silver, if you set me free with the rest of our party, and I will do my best to withdraw the outlaws and others who are about to attack you,' said Athelstane.

'Very well,' replied the other. 'It is a trifling sum, and you owe me thanks. But mark this—the Jew, Isaac of York, is not included in the agreement.'

'Nor his daughter Rebecca,' said Bois-Guilbert, who had joined them.

'I have nothing to do with Jews,' replied Athelstane, 'and they do not belong to our party.'

'Nor does the bargain include the Lady Rowena,' added De Bracy. 'She is my prize, and I do not easily part with what I have won.'

'No—nor the jester,' said Front-de-Bœuf. 'He shall enjoy both sides of his jest.'

'The Lady Rowena is betrothed to me,' replied Athelstane, 'and the jester has to-day saved his master Cedric at the risk of his life. I will be torn apart by wild horses

before I will part with the lady, and I will lose my head before a hair of the jester's be injured.'

'Betrothed to you!' cried De Bracy. 'A wealthy heiress betrothed to a Saxon slave! Do you dream? Norman princes give rich brides to Norman knights, not to Saxon dogs.'

'My ancestors were kings when yours were wayside thieves,' replied Athelstane. 'I am a noble, and you are a paid ruffian, who sells the blood of his rascally men-at-arms for a profit. The Lady Rowena marry *you*? She would rather die!'

'We shall see,' replied De Bracy. 'You are a great fighter—with the tongue.'

As he spoke, a servant entered the room, bringing a monk, who, he said, had just escaped from the outlaws, leaving his master, Prior Aymer of Jorvaulx, in their hands.

'What—more monks!' cried Front-de-Bœuf. 'Is this another trick?'

'I am Ambrose, a monk in attendance on the Prior of Jorvaulx,' replied the man. 'The reverend father has been seized by the wicked men without, stripped of his money and jewels, and is held prisoner until he pays a heavy ransom. In the name of God, I pray you, send the money to him at once.'

Front-de-Bœuf burst into a loud laugh. 'Help him with money I will not, and help him with men I cannot,' said he. Before the monk could reply, shouts from the walls were heard, and a man-at-arms burst into the room, crying that the attack had commenced, and that the enemy were throwing up a bank of earth from behind which they could shoot arrows at the defenders.

'To the battlements,' cried De Bracy, 'and let us see what these rogues are doing.' As he spoke, he threw open a door that led out on to a balcony, or kind of verandah. 'Look,' he continued, 'they are making wooden defences for archers, digging trenches, and bringing forward great

shields. The archers in that wood gather like a dark cloud before a thunder-storm.'

Front-de-Bœuf sprang to the balcony and, after a glance round, snatched up a bugle and blew a long and loud call. Men-at-arms ran to their posts at staircases, doors, towers, and walls. 'De Bracy, take the eastern side where the walls are lowest,' he shouted. 'Bois-Guilbert, guard the western side. I will defend the main gate. But do not confine yourselves to one spot, my friends; we must be everywhere to-day, and especially where the fighting is hottest.'

'Some one who understands war is leading these rascals,' said Bois-Guilbert. 'See how quiet, quick, and orderly they are, and how skilfully they advance under cover of the trees and their own defences from our arrows. Yet I see no knight in armour, nor any banner of a gentleman.'

'Yes, look,' replied De Bracy, 'there—in black armour. Why, it is the very man who overthrew Front-de-Bœuf in the lists at Ashby, the knight whom the people called the Black Sluggard.'

'So much the better,' growled Front-de-Bœuf. 'I am glad to find him among rogues and rascals in his proper place. Had I sought him among knights and gentlemen, I should never have found him, and so lost my revenge.'

The advance of the enemy put an end to further talk, and each knight hurried to his post and urged his followers to make up in bravery, strength, and skill, what they lacked in numbers.

CHAPTER 25

How Ivanhoe followed the progress of the fight.

LET us now go back for a moment to the lists at Ashby, and see what became of our hero, Wilfred of Ivanhoe, when he fell to the ground before Rowena's throne, fainting from loss of blood.

The story has already shown that the sick man in the litter of Rebecca was none other than Wilfred himself.

On seeing him lie, dying, so far as she could tell, the kind heart of the Jewish girl was touched, and turning to Isaac she begged him to have the wounded man laid in her litter and borne to a place of safety.

'He saved your life at Rotherwood,' she urged : 'now save his in return. Let the Christian see that the Jew knows how to be grateful to those who befriend him.'

'Think, my daughter,' replied Isaac, 'he is, as you say, a Christian, and we are Jews. Shall we take him to our house ?'

'In wounds, and misery, and danger of death, all men are brothers,' said Rebecca. 'Take him.'

Isaac at length gave way, and Ivanhoe was placed in Rebecca's litter and carried to the Jews' lodging. How he came thence into the castle of Front-de-Bœuf we have already seen. Luckily for him, the Norman knight did not know of his presence there. All he (or any one else except De Bracy) knew, was that a badly wounded man was one of the party captured in the wood. De Bracy, happening to look into the litter, thinking it might contain Rowena, saw him, but said nothing, because he wished to keep this suitor for the hand of the Lady Rowena in his own power. He sent two of his men-at-arms to take care of Wilfred, without telling them his name. Ulrica, finding the wounded Saxon in the charge of these rough fellows, brought Rebecca to him, and bade her nurse him back to life.

This work Rebecca was delighted to undertake, both out of gratitude to Wilfred, and because she felt safer with him than when alone in the cell to which she had at first been taken.

'Where am I, and what has happened?' asked Ivanhoe, after greeting with joy the kind nurse who had already befriended him in his need.

Rebecca told him all that had happened, adding, 'But do not despair. Even now our friends are advancing to attack the castle. From this loop-hole I can see everything; they come on boldly and in large numbers.'

'Who leads them?' asked Wilfred. 'Can you see the device on his banner?'

'There are no banners,' she replied. 'They appear to be led by a big man in black armour. Those in front carry great wooden shields and defences made of planks. Those behind bend their bows and shoot arrows from the shelter of these moving wooden walls.'

As she spoke, showers of iron-headed arrows rattled against walls, doors, loop-holes, and the armour of the defenders. Three fell dead, and several others were wounded, for the archers without were men who had used the long-bow or cross-bow daily from boyhood, and were among the best archers in the world. Their arrows flew stronger and truer than those of the Norman men-at-arms, and Locksley was a man who never missed his mark.

'What can you see, Rebecca?' asked Wilfred, trying to drag himself from the bed on which he lay.

'Nothing but arrows flying thick as rain,' she answered.

'That will not do,' said the wounded man. 'Arrows cannot capture castles. They should rush in, batter down the gates, and seize the fortress by force of arms. What is the knight in black armour doing?'

'He is leading a body of men in a rush at the outer wall. They cross the moat on a raft of wood. They are across. They plant ladders. They climb up. They are beaten

back. The defenders hurl down rocks, beams, stones, trunks of trees upon them. The ladders are thrown down. Many men are killed. The defenders are winning. No—the ladders are up again. The Black Knight is on the wall, his men following him. He is fighting Front-de-Bœuf himself. He is down ! ’ cried Rebecca.

‘ Who ? who ? who is down ? The Black Knight ? ’ groaned Wilfred.

‘ Yes ! No ! He is up again. He rains blows on Front-de-Bœuf like a woodman felling a tree. He *has* felled him. He is on his knees. Another blow ! Front-de-Bœuf is slain—or at least he lies as one dead, and the Saxons rush on.’

‘ Brian de Bois-Guilbert meets them with his men. They are pressed back. Front-de-Bœuf is dragged inside the castle, and the great gate is closed. The Saxons have won the outer walls and the courtyard,’ she continued.

‘ What are they doing now ? Quick, tell me. Oh that I could reach the window ! Why cannot I be with them, sword in hand, instead of lying here like a dying dog ? ’ said Ivanhoe.

‘ The Black Knight is battering at the postern gate with his huge axe,’ she answered. ‘ The enemy rain arrows, spears, and stones on him, but he takes no more notice of them than if they were feathers. The door is breaking, it gives way, they rush in. The Saxons are in the castle ! ’

CHAPTER 26

The end of Front-de-Bœuf, the capture of De Bracy, and the seizure of Rebecca.

REGINALD FRONT-DE-BŒUF lay dying in the chamber where he had been hastily placed by the men who dragged him into the castle.

‘ Where are these dogs of priests now ? ’ he groaned. ‘ Did not my father build them a monastery—robbing me,

his son, by doing so? They can live in fat idleness, and I can die alone here without one of them to say a prayer for my soul. I cannot last for many hours.'

'You are not alone,' said a voice, 'and you will last until your time comes. Of that wound you will not die.'

'Who speaks?' said the Norman, trying to turn his head. 'Are you a priest come to repay me for the benefits received from my family?'

'I am not a priest, but I have come to repay you,' was the reply. 'I have come to tell you that you are beaten, that your castle is in the hands of the despised Saxons, that your comrades are captured, killed, or put to flight. I have come to tell you that the day of vengeance has come at last—the day of your death in torment.'

'Are you a fiend from hell?' groaned the dying man.

'I am Ulrica, the daughter of the man you murdered, the sister of the youths you murdered, the wretched woman who has been your prisoner for twenty years, and who has only lived for this day of revenge.'

'Then you have it not, for I die sword in hand, with my armour on, slain in battle, as I would wish to die,' said he.

'You shall die by inches—roasted alive in that same armour. You shall die like an ox in a burning stable! While your men-at-arms have been busy on the walls, I, the wretched slave Ulrica, Ulrica the hideous hag, have been busy too. I have been busy in the great vault full of fuel stored for the winter.'

'You will not die cold, Reginald Front-de-Bœuf, though your hands are weak and cold as you lie there now. Before long, the last of the accursed family of Front-de-Bœuf will die the death of a dog. As the flames approach your bed, think of Ulrica, think of the flames that turned the home of her race to ashes, and see the ghosts of her murdered relatives.'

As she spoke, smoke rolled in clouds past the windows, smoke entered by the doors, smoke curled up through the

cracks of the floor, while a red glare shone in through loop-hole and window.

As the postern gate fell in, De Bracy met the Black Knight face to face, and for a few seconds the blows sounded as though coming from a smith's forge. A terrible stroke from the Black Knight's great battle-axe beat down De Bracy's shield, dented in his steel helmet, and laid him flat upon the ground.

'Yield, or die,' cried the victor, standing over him.

'I yield to no unknown rascal,' replied De Bracy. 'Do with me as you will.'

The Black Knight knelt and whispered to him.

'I yield and am your prisoner, rescue or no rescue,' replied De Bracy in a tone of deep respect.

'Go out into the courtyard and await me,' said the Black Knight. 'If you can, persuade these fools to surrender and save their lives.'

As he turned to go, De Bracy said, 'Wilfred of Ivanhoe is in this burning castle, wounded and a prisoner. Unless you can find and save him, he will be burned to death.'

'Wilfred of Ivanhoe!' cried the Black Knight. 'If a hair of his head be injured, every man in this castle shall die. Lead me to his chamber.'

Seeing the castle in flames and the enemy rushing in, Brian de Bois-Guilbert bade his men open a gate at the back of the castle, bring horses, and await him. Rushing up the turret stairs, he entered the cell of Rebecca the Jewess, only to find it empty. Hurrying from chamber to chamber in search of her, he at length heard her voice as she told Wilfred of what she could see from the window.

Entering the room silently, he strode towards her. Wilfred's feeble voice failed to attract her attention amidst the din of battle, as he cried, 'Rebecca! Bois-Guilbert! Cowardly dog—had I a sword, you would not dare face me.'

Before she knew of her peril, she was seized in the strong arms of the Templar. 'You foiled me once,' he cried. 'No one does so twice.' Flinging the shrieking girl across his shoulder, he strode from the room, saying, 'You shall be my wife this very day,' and giving no heed whatever to the cries of Ivanhoe, who was driven mad with rage at his inability to strike a blow in Rebecca's defence. 'Stay, you coward dog!' he cried. 'Unhand her, if you call yourself a knight! A knight! You are a base ruffian, a coward who makes war on women'—— The only answer was the roar of flames.

CHAPTER 27

The fight round Rebecca. Athelstane is cut down.

A FEW moments after the departure of Bois-Guilbert, the Black Knight entered the chamber. 'I am only just in time, Wilfred,' said he, as smoke poured into the room.

'You are in time to save a woman if you hasten,' replied Wilfred. 'Leave me and pursue the false coward, Bois-Guilbert, who has just carried off the daughter of Isaac of York. Save the Lady Rowena. Rescue the noble Cedric and Athelstane.'

'All in their turn, and all in good time,' answered the Black Sluggard. 'Your turn is first, and your time is now.' So saying, he seized Wilfred, raised him in his arms, and bore him off in much the same way as the Templar had carried Rebecca.

By this time the fighting was over, the defenders either being slain or having yielded. The air was filled with smoke; the floors and stairs were slippery with blood and strewn with dead; groans and shouts and the sounds of orders and of hurrying feet were heard on all sides. One turret had fallen beneath the attack of the flames. Through this scene of strife and death, Cedric (who had fought

fiercely beside Locksley, Friar Tuck, and the Black Knight at the head of the outlaws) rushed in search of Rowena, while the faithful Gurth followed him closely. Just as she had given up all hope, and was fully expecting to be burnt to death, he entered her smoke-filled chamber, which was locked on the outside, and brought her out unhurt. Giving her to the care of Gurth with orders to lead her out of the castle to their friends, he again hastened in search of Athelstane, determined to find him and set him free, or to die in the attempt as the castle burned.

Athelstane and Wamba had been left in the hall when the attack commenced, and had remained there under guard until the Saxons burst into the castle. When this happened and the shouts of the victors were heard, Wamba seized two pieces of old rusty armour that hung on the walls, and banged them together with such shouts and war-cries that the guard in the outer room, thinking that the Saxons had somehow got into the hall through the windows, fled for their lives, leaving the outer door open. On finding themselves no longer guarded, the two quietly walked out, met Cedric, and hurried out at the back of the castle. Here they saw Bois-Guilbert surrounded by his men and holding Rebecca on the saddle in front of him. 'Around his little party of men-at-arms were a number of Saxons trying to prevent their escape. Seeing the Templar with a woman in his arms, Athelstane at once supposed that he was carrying off the Lady Rowena. 'I will slay that villain,' he cried, and rushed towards him. 'Be careful,' shouted Wamba, 'that is not the Lady Rowena, and you are not in armour. A silk cap will not turn a steel blade, and you cannot fight without a weapon.' But Athelstane's blood was up. As with most Saxons, it took a good deal to rouse him, but, once roused, there was no turning him from his purpose while he lived. Snatching a heavy wooden mace or club from the hand of a dying man, he rushed into the fight, striking terrible blows to left and right, each of which

felled a man to the earth. As he reached Bois-Guilbert, however, he saw the truth of Wamba's words. Raising his heavy sword, the Templar stood up in his stirrups and struck a fearful blow at Athelstane. Shield and helmet might have saved him. As it was, the tough and heavy club was cut through as though it had been a twig, when Athelstane raised it to protect his head; the sword struck full upon the silken cap, and the Saxon dropped to the ground and moved no more.

'Can I rescue you, De Bracy?' cried Bois-Guilbert, catching sight of that knight at this moment as he leant against the gate-post.

'No,' replied De Bracy, 'I have yielded to be a true prisoner—rescue or no rescue. Look to yourself and escape while you may. Get out of England as quickly as possible. *There are hawks abroad.* I dare not speak more plainly—but beware.'

'Well, as you please,' answered Bois-Guilbert. 'If you will not be rescued, you must stay. As to *hawks*, I think the walls of the monastery of our Order of Knights Templars can keep them out. Farewell.' So saying, he galloped off with his followers and disappeared in the forest.

A minute later, a female figure appeared on the walls of the highest turret of the castle, from every window and loop-hole of which smoke and flames streamed forth. It was Ulrica. In her hand she held a red banner, and, as the flames shot up, she waved it aloft and burst into a Saxon war-song. Her long hair flew back from her uncovered head, and like a witch she stood for a few minutes looking on the work of her vengeance, and shouting curses on the house of Front-de-Bœuf. Then with a terrible crash the turret fell in, and she perished in the flames that had already slain her tyrant as he lay helpless on his bed.

Before night nothing remained of the castle of Front-de-Bœuf but blackened walls and burnt ruins.

CHAPTER 28

The victors foregather in the forest.

THE daylight had dawned on the oak forest, and the green boughs glittered with all their pearls of dew. The outlaws were all gathered at the great tree which was their usual place of meeting. Near by, they, their friends, Cedric's party, and all the prisoners, had spent the night after the siege, some in sleeping, others in feasting, singing, and rejoicing. Beneath the tree lay the loot or spoils of war taken from the burning castle. The plunder was of great value, and much of it had been obtained by the late owner in the same way as it had now been gained by its present owners. The great robber had been robbed by the little robbers. Gold and silver vessels, chests of money, rich armour, and splendid clothing, lay in a great heap. No man of the band of outlaws had taken anything for himself. Everything had been brought and put into the common fund or lot for disposal by the chief of the band. On a throne of turf beneath the meeting-tree sat Locksley the archer—the famous leader of these outlaws of Sherwood Forest, known to history as Robin Hood. He gave a seat at his right to the Black Knight, and one at his left to Cedric.

'Pardon me for taking the chief place, noble sirs,' said he, 'but in these forests I am monarch. They are my kingdom, and these merry men, the outlaws of Sherwood Forest, are my subjects. They would think little of my power, if I gave place to any man in my own dominions. We must hasten to divide the spoil, for when the news of our deed gets abroad we shall have the bands of De Bracy, Malvoisin, and other friends of Front-de-Bœuf down upon us. Noble Cedric, take one half of the booty.'

'Good yeoman,' said Cedric, 'my heart is broken. In losing the noble Athelstane of Coningsburgh the Saxons have lost their hope. I wish to return with the Lady

Rowena to Rotherwood, and to have his body borne to his castle for burial. I have only waited here to thank you and your brave men for their splendid rescue. I have not waited for a share of this spoil. God forbid that I should touch a thing belonging to a Norman robber.'

'You and your men did half the work,' replied Locksley. 'Give them half the booty in reward.'

'I am rich enough to reward them myself,' said Cedric, 'and I will take nothing. I will reward two of them at once. Where is the brave Wamba who was willing to give his life for his master? I will prove my gratitude and provide for him for life.'

'Do the same for Gurth, Uncle Cedric,' cried Wamba, who was standing by. 'It will further reward me if you will. His only fault is his love for your own brave son, and he has fought like a hero for you to-day.'

'Bring him here,' said Cedric, 'and call a smith. Let the collar be filed from his neck. I give him his freedom and a field of good land.'

The tramp of horses was heard, and the Lady Rowena rode up, surrounded by several riders and a party of footmen. A look of hopefulness was upon her face. She knew that Ivanhoe, whom she loved, was safe, and that Athelstane, whom she disliked (but was ordered to marry by Cedric, her guardian), was dead. Now that Athelstane was no more, and this marriage, the great desire of Cedric's life, impossible, she thought it likely that he would consent to her union with his son Wilfred. Wilfred had loved her from boyhood, and it was because he feared they might marry, that Cedric had disinherited Wilfred and driven him from home. She thanked Locksley and his men for their brave conduct and help in the rescue of herself and her friends. Before setting forth, Cedric also thanked the Black Knight for the part he had played in saving them, and invited him to come and make Rotherwood his home. The Black Knight expressed his gratitude for the offer, but said

that pressing affairs called him to another part of the country.

When farewells had been exchanged and Cedric and his party had gone, Locksley turned to the Black Knight and asked him to take as much as he liked of the booty as his share.

'All I want,' replied the knight, 'is leave to dispose of Sir Maurice de Bracy.'

'He is yours already,' said the archer, 'and lucky it is for him. I would have hanged him to this tree, and as many of his rascally band of hired soldiers as I could catch.'

'De Bracy,' said the knight to the prisoner, 'go. You are free. I scorn to take revenge on such as you. Depart, but beware in future.'

De Bracy bowed low and murmured words of thanks and respect as though he were in the presence of a king, then, taking one of Front-de-Bœuf's horses (which had been brought from the stables the night before), he galloped off into the forest.

As he went, a shouting and surging band of merry outlaws approached Locksley, crying, 'Another prisoner, Captain, the captive of the bow and spear, or rather of the word and prayer of our bold chaplain, Friar Tuck.'

'Yes, indeed,' shouted the monk; 'he is doubly my captive, and I should have the whole of his ransom. I have captured his body and saved his soul. Behold the brave fellow.' So saying, he thrust forward the unhappy Isaac of York, well-nigh dead from fright, starvation, and ill-usage.

'And where did you capture him, worthy Friar?' asked Locksley.

'Why, at the castle, in fair fight, to be sure,' replied Friar Tuck. 'I went down into the vaults and cellars just to see what sort of wine that rascal Front-de-Bœuf kept, and in the lowest dungeon of all, instead of good wine, I found a Jew. I raised my club and said, "Yield thee, dog,

or die," and straightway he yielded. Then I said, "Become a good Christian, or die," and straightway he became one. Have I not found a rich prize? He shall pay me a million pounds of gold.'

'I think you *did* find some wine, holy father,' said Locksley, with a laugh. Turning to the poor old captive, he asked, 'Well, Jew, and are you a Christian now?'

'Truly,' answered Isaac, 'I did not understand a word of what this holy and reverend gentleman said. I was mad with agony, fear, and grief. Have mercy on me, noble sir.'

'Oh, the wicked rogue,' cried Friar Tuck in pretended wrath, on hearing these words. 'First he becomes a Christian and then he recants and goes back to his errors! Did you not promise to give all that you possess to the monks of our holy order?'

'No, no!' screamed Isaac, 'such words never passed my lips. Have mercy on a ruined and beggared old man. Let me go in search of my daughter.'

'Peace!' said Locksley. 'We are not so fond of Jews that we wish to keep you, so think quickly how much ransom you can pay. When it is paid you can go. Meanwhile I will deal with a prisoner of a different kind.'

Turning to his followers, he said, 'Bring the Prior Aymer of Jorvaulx here.'

CHAPTER 29

The Jew and the Prior assess each other's ransom.

THE gay and gallant Prior of the Abbey of Jorvaulx looked a little less neat and much less merry than usual. His night of captivity among the outlaws had improved neither his appearance nor his temper.

'Are you savages or are you Christian men?' cried he, as he was brought before the outlaw captain. 'Is this the way to handle holy fathers of the Church. Set me free

at once and restore all my property, or beware my vengeance. This fellow, who said he would hang me to the highest tree in the forest if I did not give up all I had, shall get what he deserves when I return to my abbey.'

'Did Allan-a-Dale threaten to hang your reverence?' asked Locksley, in a tone of grief and unbelief, as though his ears must be deceiving him.

'He did. He swore it,' replied the angry prior.

'Then you had better do as he tells you, or he will certainly do it,' said Locksley, in quite a different tone.

Allan-a-Dale laughed, and then whispered to Locksley, 'I have a bright idea. Let the Jew fix the prior's ransom and the prior fix the Jew's.'

The captain of the outlaws smiled and nodded his head. 'Here, Isaac,' said he; 'if the worthy and noble prior were your prisoner, what ransom would you make him pay?'

'Well I know that he is very rich,' answered Isaac, 'for I have done business with his monastery and bought great quantities of wheat, barley, fruit, wool, and other things produced on the lands of the Abbey of Jorvaulx. Oh, it is a rich abbey, and right well and comfortably they live. The prior could pay six hundred crowns and never know he had lost it.'

'Dog!' shouted the prior. 'Six hundred! I have not so much in the whole world. I could not raise one half the money if I sold all that the abbey has.'

'It is a sentence,' cried the outlaws, 'a just sentence. Solomon could not have judged better.'

'You hear your doom, Prior,' said Locksley.

'I cannot pay so much,' replied Aymer.

'I can lend it him,' said Isaac.

'Excellent!' cried Locksley. 'Good Jew, you shall provide him with the six hundred pieces, and he shall give you a full receipt and promise of repayment before we let him go. I am glad you are rich enough to make this loan. We shall expect all the more ransom from you.'

'Alas!' cried Isaac, turning pale. 'I shall have to borrow it myself, and I shall not be able to find another single penny for myself. I cannot pay a ransom and lend the prior this money too.'

'Oh yes, you can, good Isaac,' said Locksley, 'and the prior shall fix it for you. What can Isaac pay, do you think, reverend father?'

'Why, Isaac of York is the richest man in England,' replied Aymer. 'He could ransom the ten tribes of the Jews, and buy Jerusalem. You will be cheating yourselves if you let him go for less than a thousand crowns.'

'A sentence,' cried the outlaws, 'a sentence. Let the Jew pay a thousand crowns.'

With a shriek of horror Isaac fell upon his knees and prayed to Locksley to spare him. 'I am a ruined beggar,' he cried, 'and I have this day lost my child.'

'Then you will have the fewer expenses,' said Prior Aymer, 'and can pay more easily.'

'Noble sir,' said Isaac to Locksley, 'how shall I be able to rescue or ransom my daughter without money, if you take all I have? They tell me that she has been carried off by Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert. What can a beggar do against a man like him? Can I attack him by law or by force, can I bribe him, can I do anything, without money?'

'Friends,' said Locksley, 'the old man is a Jew, but I pity him none the less. Let him pay the same ransom as the prior—or a hundred less. I will lose the hundred myself, and the rest of you shall divide the remainder. Let us leave the old man enough money to ransom his daughter.'

The outlaws at once agreed to their leader's proposal, and Isaac knelt and kissed his feet.

'Get up, man,' said Locksley, 'and hasten to York. If you wish to prevent your daughter from being married to Bois-Guilbert by force, do not spare money. Doubtless

he only wishes to wed her that he may inherit your gold. Be wise and let him have it now, however much he may demand, if you would save her from a life of misery.'

'I would rather see her dead than married to this brutal enemy of my race,' replied Isaac.

'Then hasten away. Take the prior's receipt and pay the ransoms to the two men whom I will send for them,' said Locksley.

As Isaac and the Prior Aymer of Jorvaulx departed, the Black Knight, who had watched and listened with great interest, came up to Locksley to say farewell.

'You rule your forest dominions well and strongly,' said he, 'and, with the power to do great evil, you do much good. You fight tyrants, and I learn that a great part of what you take from the rich you give to the poor. Who are you really? I think you have a name other than Locksley, Diccon Bend-the-Bow, and Robin Hood.'

'I have another name,' answered Locksley, 'and I think you have another name besides that of the Black Knight—but I do not ask it. Let each of us respect the secret of the other.'

'As you will,' replied the Black Knight. 'Farewell, we part good friends, and we shall meet again.'

'We shall,' said Locksley; 'and meanwhile I ask you to accept this silver bugle. One blast upon it, like this, will bring my men to your help, should you ever need help in this forest.'

The knight thanked him for the gift and the promise of help, and with a hearty hand-shake they parted.

CHAPTER 30

How Prince John plotted his brother's murder.

THERE was feasting, singing, dancing, and gaiety in the Castle of York, to which Prince John had invited all those nobles, knights, leaders, captains of hired men-at-arms, and great churchmen who, he hoped, would support him in his attempt to get his brother's throne.

But where were his trusty followers and good friends, Front-de-Bœuf, Bois-Guilbert, and De Bracy? Where was the rascal, Isaac of York, from whom he wanted large sums of money for the hire of soldiers and purchase of weapons?

He was told that the knights had gone off with a few followers to commit an assault on the rude Saxons who had insulted and defied him. Also that Isaac of York had disappeared from his lodgings, but that Bois-Guilbert knew where he had gone, and had in fact bribed the soldiers who were supposed to protect him.

While talking with some of his counsellors and blaming the knights for going off on their own affairs at such a time of anxiety and danger to their Prince, John suddenly cried, 'See! here is De Bracy.'

De Bracy it was, who strode into the hall, pale, weary-looking, blood-stained, and covered with mud and dust.

'What ails you, De Bracy?' said John. 'What is the matter? Where are the others?'

De Bracy told him all that had happened. 'Front-de-Bœuf is dead, Bois-Guilbert has fled, I must leave England,' he said, 'and *King Richard is here*—within a few miles of York.'

John turned pale as death and fell into a chair. 'Richard here,' he said in a whisper, '*here*? You are mad or lying. How could he be here with an army, and I not know it?'

'I said nothing of an army,' replied De Bracy. 'Richard Plantagenet, Richard the Lion-hearted, King Richard of

England, is here, now, within a few miles of York—and the other day he was *within a few yards of you* at Ashby. The Black Knight, the Black Sluggard, is no other than your brother, King Richard.'

John closed his eyes and lay back in the chair as though dying. Suddenly he sat up.

'Then he has no followers. He is alone?' he cried.

'He is with the Saxon outlaws whom, I told you, he led to the attack on Front-de-Bœuf's castle. Otherwise he is quite alone, and I believe he will travel on through the forest by himself.'

'De Bracy,' said John, 'if any accident were to happen to him, I think I should be king without much difficulty, although my elder brother Geoffrey has a son. Yes, I think I could take the place of the boy Arthur. Think of my gratitude, De Bracy, and of the rewards I could give, when king, to the man who caused some accident to happen to Richard. I should make him High Marshal of England—the chief of all my armies.'

'If you want your brother murdered you must go to some one else,' replied De Bracy. 'I am not a murderer, and besides, Richard spared my life and let me go. I will neither murder him nor fight against him.'

'Are you not my hired soldier, villain?' cried John. Is it not your duty to fight for me?'

'I will fight for you,' replied De Bracy, 'but not against King Richard. Nor am I a villain.'

Finding threats, promises, and prayers alike useless to make De Bracy undertake anything against Richard, John pretended to admire his honesty and noble nature in refusing to try to injure the man who had spared him.

'I honour your virtue, De Bracy,' said he, 'and approve your good faith. Never return evil for good, if you cannot always return good for evil. We can find you other work, and reward your noble conduct none the less.'

De Bracy had no sooner left the apartment than John

sent for his chief knight and counsellor, Sir Waldemar Fitzurse.

To him he told the terrible news, and pointed out how the death of Richard would end all their difficulties and danger.

'He is wandering in the forest in search of adventures,' said John. 'He has escaped one prison, let him find another and a safer one. The safest is a grave.'

Waldemar Fitzurse went out and sent for six of his best and strongest men-at-arms and a guide who knew the Sherwood Forest from end to end.

CHAPTER 31

Isaac pleads for his daughter with the Grand Master of the Templars.

OUR tale now returns to Isaac of York. Mounted upon a mule, the gift of Locksley, with two tall outlaws to act as his guard and guides, the Jew had set out for the monastery of the Knights of the Temple, at Templestowe, for the purpose of trying to ransom his daughter, and prevent her marriage with the hated Bois-Guilbert.

It was a day's journey, and Isaac had hoped to reach it before nightfall. But within four miles of the place his strength failed totally, cruel pains shot through his back and limbs, and great bodily sufferings were added to his agony of mind. Being unable to go further, he turned aside to the house of Nathan ben Israel, a Jewish rabbi of his tribe, and an old friend.

Nathan was a learned physician, and quickly gave Isaac such drugs as were then in use for the cure of fever. Next morning, when Isaac wished to arise and go on his way, Nathan begged him to rest longer, as he was unfit to travel.

'Fit or unfit I must go at once to Templestowe,' said Isaac. 'It is a matter of more than life and death. My daughter has been taken there by Brian de Bois-Guilbert,

and will be made to marry him unless I can rescue her. I will spend all I have to set her free.'

'But how can she be at Templestowe?' asked Nathan. 'Do you not know that Beaumanoir, the Grand Master of all the Knights Templars, the strictest and most austere man that ever lived, has come to that monastery on a sudden visit? He has heard that the members of the Order living there break the rules and lead evil lives. This is a surprise visit, that he may catch and punish the offenders. No Knight Templar dares marry, for their rules forbid it. If Brian de Bois-Guilbert took *any* woman there, and said he meant to marry her, he would be cast into a dungeon and chained up as a madman. How much less dare he take a Jewess! Beaumanoir is as great a hater of Jews as slayer of Saracens.'

'I have heard of Lucas Beaumanoir, the Grand Master of the Knights Templars,' said Isaac. 'He is a fierce, ascetic man, who keeps every rule of his Order with the utmost care, and severely punishes all who break them. Other Templars may be bribed with gold or tempted in other ways; but he hates all wickedness, despises all pleasure, cares nothing for riches, and lives only to win merit and earn a crown in heaven. Nevertheless, to Templestowe I will go in search of my daughter.'

Bidding his friend farewell, Isaac mounted his mule again and rode off in the direction of the monastery of Templestowe.

This house of the Templars had seen a great and sudden change. The unexpected arrival of the dread Grand Master had brought terror to the hearts, and good conduct to the ways, of its inmates.

The stern ascetic rigour of the real Templar discipline had suddenly taken the place of lazy luxury, feasting, vice, and wickedness, under the terrible eye of Lucas Beaumanoir, whose word could send the most powerful to the dungeons or to death.

This Beaumanoir was an old man with a long grey beard and shaggy grey eyebrows overhanging eyes full of life and fire. A brave warrior in the past, he was now a stern and fearless ruler of the great Order, and a man of the strongest religious feeling and purest life. His power was such that he spoke as an equal to kings, and his force of character such that he ruled the brave and high-born knights as a man rules children. Such, however, was the narrow and fierce spirit of the times that such a man as he held it not only no sin, but a good deed, to kill a Jew, and a noble act to slay a Saracen.

A great grief saddened the fine face of this man—grief at the knowledge that the Order of Knights Templars was in a state of decay, and no longer had the purity, nobility, unselfishness, and grandeur of purpose that it once possessed. In his absence rules were disregarded in many of the monasteries, and, from being the bare and simple homes of ascetic, humble, and devoted men, they became clubs in which wealthy but worthless men led lives of luxury, vice, and idleness. His great desire and aim was to restore the Order to its old position of a league of fighting monks whose lives were devoted to prayer, poverty, and doing good, when they were not fighting the enemies of their religion.

As he walked up and down the monastery garden in deep thought and meditation, one of the brethren of the Order informed him that a Jew, calling himself Isaac of York, begged to be admitted to his presence, and added that he brought accusation against Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert which could scarcely be believed or repeated.

‘Admit him,’ said the Grand Master.

On being brought into the presence of the terrible Beaumanoir, Isaac flung himself at his feet and poured forth the tale of his wrongs. When he was told that Rebecca was carried off by Bois-Guilbert and would very likely be found imprisoned somewhere in the monastery itself, rage overcame the Grand Master.

'Dog!' he cried. 'Dare you tell me to my face that there is a woman, and that woman a Jewess, here, in the very monastery that now shelters *me*. Dare you say that a noble Templar desires to wed the daughter of a wretched, unbelieving Jew?'

'My lord,' replied Isaac humbly, 'my daughter is here and I must have her. She was dragged here by force and she is not to blame. As you think that we pollute your sacred house, have us both turned out at once, I beseech you.'

'That will I do for you without delay,' replied the Grand Master. 'Here,' he cried to the guards at the gate, 'fling this dog into the road and send the Preceptor of this monastery to me.'

Poor Isaac was straightway hustled out into the road, and a minute later the Preceptor (or President) of Templestowe Monastery bowed before Beaumanoir and inquired what he wanted.

CHAPTER 32

Rebecca to be tried for witchcraft.

ALBERT MALVOISIN, the Preceptor of Templestowe, was the brother of that Philip Malvoisin of whom we have already heard. He was one of the many Knights Templars who at this time cloaked a life of vice, idleness, and all wickedness under a veil of piety and holiness. He was a great friend of Brian de Bois-Guilbert, and was well aware that that knight had brought a Jewess into the monastery contrary to all rules of the Order, and intended to marry her—which was even worse.

As he stood before the fierce and ascetic old Beaumanoir—whom he greatly feared—his heart sank, and he actually trembled at the first words of the Grand Master.

'Why is there a woman—a Jewish woman—in the house of holy monks?'

For a moment Malvoisin was dumb with fright. How could the Grand Master have found out the guilty and awful secret?

'Speak, man!' thundered the angry Beaumanoir.

'I trust I acted for the best,' replied Malvoisin, as soon as his tongue would perform its function. 'Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert indeed came here with a Jewish female whom he said he meant to marry. I at once saw that the noble knight had been bewitched by this Jewish sorceress, and it seemed to me the best course to admit her and shut her up in a cell, while I did my best to free the mind of Sir Brian from this enchantment. She is here as you say, my lord, but a prisoner, and I did not trouble you with the matter as I know your mind is filled with greater and higher affairs. It is my hope that Sir Brian will get over this rash and foolish love for the girl, and that I shall be able to send her away before long. If I set her free now he would follow and marry her. Here nothing can happen.'

'You have done well,' said the Grand Master on hearing this explanation.

Malvoisin had not done well. He had let Bois-Guilbert bring Rebecca into the monastery, knowing full well that the girl was a most unwilling and unhappy prisoner, and that Bois-Guilbert was no more bewitched than the Grand Master himself. He had merely done as he had done a hundred times before—allowed the rules of the Order to be broken, and the laws of God and man to be defied. A man of evil life himself, he was quite willing to allow evil to be done by others—and the house of God to be used as a prison for innocent and helpless victims of the very men whose oaths and laws bound them to do all the good they could.

'She is a witch,' continued Beaumanoir, 'and she shall die the death of a witch. If Bois-Guilbert will not confess that he has been bewitched by her, he shall rot in a dungeon until he does. Let her be brought before me for trial at

once, and let every knight in this monastery attend the court in the great hall. Go.'

Malvoisin bowed low and hurried off in search of Bois-Guilbert. Here was a pretty state of affairs for his rash, wrong-headed friend! Either he must see the woman whom he wished to marry burnt to death in public as a witch, or he must be chained up in a dungeon as a lunatic whose senses had been taken from him by the magic and enchantments of a devil in the form of a beautiful woman.

On finding Bois-Guilbert, he quickly laid the case before him and strongly advised him to let the girl be burnt. 'Do you wish to give up your glorious career as one of the most famous and admired of the knights of the renowned Order of the Temple?' said he. 'Are you prepared to be chained like a wild beast in a dark and filthy dungeon beneath this monastery, never to be heard of more, and to live on stale bread and filthy water until death comes to relieve your sufferings? Give up your mad idea of marrying this girl. Let her be burnt as a witch—there are plenty of others.'

'You are a rascal and a coward,' replied Bois-Guilbert.

'I will speak with you again,' said Malvoisin. 'Meanwhile the court assembles, and you must attend. The Jewess will have to be taken by guards from your apartments to the prisoner's dock before Beaumanoir. ~~A~~ last word—be careful—think of your past, of your name and fame, and of your hopes and ambitions. Do not fling all away for the daughter of a Jew, and go from a knight's seat and saddle to a felon's cell.'



CHAPTER 33

Rebecca is condemned, but appeals for trial by combat.

‘DAUGHTER of an accursed race,’ said Malvoisin, entering with his guards the chamber in which Rebecca was imprisoned, ‘arise and follow me.’

‘Where and why?’ asked Rebecca.

‘It is for you to obey, not to question,’ was the reply; ‘but since you ask, it is to the judgement hall that you will be taken, to answer for your crimes. Come before your judge.’

‘Most willingly,’ replied Rebecca; ‘it is all I ask. As I have committed no crimes, the sooner I am taken before a judge, the sooner I shall be set free from the bondage in which I am kept by this wicked man. May the innocent and the guilty both receive what they deserve.’

In the crowded hall of the monastery sat the court of the Order of Knights of the Temple, assembled to try the Jewess for the sin of sorcery and bewitching a knight of the Order by means of evil arts and magic. Witches and witchcraft were firmly believed in at that time in Europe, and the punishment for any person found guilty of black magic, of dealings with the devil, and of witchcraft, was burning alive.

On a dais or platform sat the Grand Master in the chief seat, and the officers of the monastery, the body of the hall being filled with knights and monks, guards, attendants, and guests. On a small platform in the centre stood Rebecca, between two soldiers.

The whole assembly first sang a hymn of praise to God. When it was finished the Grand Master rose and addressed the court. In a long speech he set forth the virtues and the brave deeds of the famous knight Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, one of the best of their Order, and then told how he had been foully and wickedly bewitched, how he had seen the woman at Ashby, followed her to Torquilstone through the power of her magic, carried her off to the castle, and then, when the castle was stormed, had again carried her off through fire and foes at the greatest risk of his life. Such was the power of her magic and the strength of the spell she had cast over him, that he had finally brought her to the monastery of his Order, of all places, and was fully bent upon marrying her, a thing impossible for any Christian, and ten times impossible for a crusader and a knight of the holy Order of the Knights of the Temple. Could anything be more clear than that this Jewess was a wicked witch bent on the destruction, body and soul, of a holy servant of God? Was there any reason why she should not be burnt as a witch? If any one could possibly still doubt it, further proofs would be brought forward showing that she was a witch and had practised witchcraft and black magic.

An old man, who worked for the monks, was then made

to give evidence. He stated that he had once worked for Isaac the Jew as a carpenter, and that while in his employ he had fallen very ill. The prisoner Rebecca had cured him with medicines and ointment. These had smelt strange and outlandish. Their effect was quite magical. The pains had left him and he had recovered. The President of the monastery had told him to appear at the trial and say this. The President had said she was a witch. He did not know about this, but she had certainly cured him in a magical manner.

'What have you to say, Brian de Bois-Guilbert?' asked the Grand Master, when one or two other witnesses, hired by Malvoisin, had been heard. 'Will you accuse this witch also?'

Bois-Guilbert uttered no word in reply.

'Accuse her you shall, or into the lowest dungeon of this monastery you go as a madman,' said the Grand Master. 'You accuse this witch of having cast a spell on you; your present state of mind and your desire to marry her prove the truth of your accusation, and if more evidence were wanting, we have had it.'

Turning to Rebecca, he added, 'Have you anything to say in your defence, or any reason or plea to bring forward to show why you should not be burnt alive?'

'I am a witch because a rash and violent man has carried me off? I am a witch because I have given simple Eastern remedies to a sick man?' replied Rebecca. 'Then since these are your proofs of witchcraft, I refuse to plead. I demand a champion as, by your own laws, I am allowed to do.'

Rebecca here referred to an ancient custom of trial by combat, by which an accused person was allowed to fight his accuser. If he won, it was supposed that God had helped him to prove his innocence. If he was defeated, it was held that his guilt was proved. In the case of a person who could not fight, such as a woman, a cripple, or an aged

man, a champion was allowed to fight instead, if one could be found. If any knight would come forward and take Rebecca's part and be her champion, her fate would depend on the result of his fight with her accuser.

A smile of contempt was seen on the faces of all present. A champion! Who would be the champion of a Jewess accused of witchcraft? Who would fight Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, whom the Grand Master had declared to be her accuser (unless he preferred to go to the dungeon as a bewitched madman)?

'Unless a champion appears within three days to fight for you against Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, you die by fire,' said the Grand Master. 'And unless he wins, you die.'

'God's will be done!' replied Rebecca. 'I put my trust in Him to Whom a minute is as long a space in which to save me, as is a year.'

'Choose a messenger,' said the Grand Master, 'and send him to whom you will. He shall have free access to you in your prison for the next three days. At the end of that time you will be brought out into the lists belonging to this monastery. There you will either be burnt to death or successfully defended by a champion. Find such a champion if you can!'

CHAPTER 34

The Black Knight in trouble. Locksley answers the bugle.

THAT night a poor Saxon took a letter from Rebecca and went in search of Isaac of York, to whom it was addressed. After making many inquiries among his friends and neighbours, and of pedlars who travelled about those parts, he found Isaac with Rabbi ben Israel, anxiously awaiting the result of the trial of Rebecca, as near the monastery as they dared to come.

On reading the letter, Isaac fell to the ground as though dying. When he came to his senses, he cried to the Rabbi,

'She is to be burnt to death, or to find a champion to fight the knight, Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert ! Where is the warrior who would fight for a Jewess, and where is the knight who could overthrow this Bois-Guilbert, were he willing to make the attempt ? My daughter must die this awful death in three days. God of Abraham ! what shall I do ? She says, " Tell the good knight, Sir Wilfred of Ivanhoe. We saved him ; perhaps he will save me by finding a champion. He is still far too weak from his wounds to put on his armour and fight for me himself." '

'Hasten to him, anyhow,' said the Rabbi ben Israel. 'He has great influence with Richard the King—who is even now in England, I hear. If he cannot fight for her himself he may get Richard to interfere, or he may find a champion willing to fight for her. Go to him. Meanwhile, I will go to York and see whether I can hire the service of some fierce and needy knight who will fight for my gold and for the honour of overthrowing this villain Bois-Guilbert. Hasten away, and spare neither time, strength, nor money.'

While these things were taking place the Black Knight was pursuing his way and his fortunes in Sherwood Forest.

On leaving the outlaws' meeting-place, he took the path to a small priory or monastery not far distant, accompanied by Gurth and Wamba. To this place he had taken Wilfred of Ivanhoe on rescuing him from the burning castle. Arrived at the priory, he was taken into the chamber in which Ivanhoe lay, and remained long in grave talk with his faithful follower. After they had discussed various plans and made arrangements, messengers were dispatched in all directions, bearing sealed messages to loyal nobles and officials, telling them that King Richard the Lion Heart was in England, and naming the time and place for them to meet him with all the forces at their command.

On saying farewell to Wilfred, he told him that he meant

to ask Cedric to forgive him, and to receive him again into his household and his heart.

‘Come to Coningsburgh in a day or two, or as soon as you can travel, Wilfred,’ said he. ‘Your father will be there for Athelstane’s funeral ceremony. I am going in that direction myself, and shall be there for several days. Before I leave, I hope to see you kneel at Cedric’s feet, and Cedric embrace you as his beloved and forgiven son.’

‘Farewell, your Majesty,’ replied Ivanhoe; ‘Wamba will guide you safely, and doubtless while away the time with jest and story. I shall follow you in a day or two.’

But not long after the departure of King Richard (who still called himself the Black Knight, and went about as a wandering, unknown traveller from the Holy Land), Ivanhoe sent for the prior of the monastery.

‘I am feeling better, holy father,’ said he, ‘and would beg the loan of a quiet and gentle horse. I feel I could ride at a slow pace. I must have lost less blood than I thought.’

‘But why go to-day?’ asked the prior. ‘Surely another day or two of rest will be better for you than a too early return to active life. Stay with us; you could not out-stay your welcome, son of Cedric, my old friend.’

‘Prior,’ replied Ivanhoe, ‘have you ever had a feeling that some evil was drawing near? Have you ever found your mind darkened by a cloud of dread of something unknown, as the summer sky is darkened by a rain-cloud? I fear some evil to my friend the Black Knight. There is some danger in his path, I am certain. Perhaps his visit to Coningsburgh is in itself a danger. The Saxons will know he is a Norman without knowing who he is. Enraged by the death of Athelstane, and excited by the wine of the funeral feast, they may attack him. Were I with him, I could save him. To me they would listen, though they were mad with rage and grief.’

Shortly after, Ivanhoe started forth from the monastery,

riding the quiet and gentle little horse of the prior, while Gurth carried his master's heavy arms and armour. Taking the forest path towards Coningsburgh, he hurried on in the track of the Black Knight as well as his weakness and the state of his wounds would let him.

Meantime, the Black Knight and Wamba, his guide, were pacing at leisure through the depths of the wild forest, Wamba from time to time singing a merry song, or telling a story that made the knight laugh heartily.

Suddenly Wamba cried, 'Close the face-guard of your helmet, Sir Knight, and take your shield from your back!'

'Why, Fool?' replied the Black Knight.

'Because some of these trees bear fruit of steel, I think,' was the answer. 'I caught the flash of armour on your right, and heard the tread of horses.'

As he spoke, three arrows flew from a thicket and rattled on the knight's helmet. Had his visor or face-guard been open, they would have pierced his brain. At the same moment six or seven men-at-arms, with lances levelled, dashed down paths from right, left, and front towards the Black Knight.

Three of the lances struck him and broke with as little effect as if they had been driven against a tower of steel.

Raising himself in his stirrups with an air of great dignity, he cried, 'What means this, fellows?'

The men made no other reply than to draw their swords and shout, 'Die, tyrant.'

'Ha!' replied the Black Knight, 'have we traitors and murderers here?' and striking right and left, he felled a man at every blow.

As his desperate enemies gave way before him, and it seemed that by his own unaided strength and skill the Black Knight would win the fight, a knight in blue armour, who had hitherto remained hidden, suddenly dashed forward with his lance, and taking aim, not at the knight but at his horse, wounded the noble animal mortally.

'That was the foul stroke of a coward,' cried the Black Knight, as the horse fell with him to the earth.

As he fell, Wamba sprang forward, seized the bugle that Locksley had given the knight, and blew with all his might the blast which was the outlaws' signal for 'Come to the rescue'. This he did again and again—the assailants drawing back in fear and the belief that the Black Knight must have a party of followers at hand.

'Shame on you, false cowards,' cried the man in blue armour, as they hung back, 'Do you flee at the sound of a horn blown by a wretched jester. On to the attack! Do you fear one man?'

So saying, he dashed at the Black Knight, but never reached him, for Wamba, leaping to one side as he passed, cut his horse across the tendons of the hind legs with his sword, and brought the poor beast to the ground—never to rise again.

The position of the Black Knight was still one of great danger, as he was hotly attacked by the knight in blue armour on foot and by mounted men-at-arms at the same moment—when suddenly a flight of well-aimed arrows stretched two of his enemies dead upon the ground and wounded three others. At the same time a band of outlaws, headed by Locksley and Friar Tuck, burst through the bushes of the surrounding forest. In a minute all but the Blue Knight lay dead or dying.

'Seize that knight and remove his helmet,' cried the Black Knight before stopping to thank his rescuers. 'He seems to be the leader of these villains.'

As the outlaws roughly tore off the helmet of the Blue Knight, cutting the laces with their knives and hammering the fastenings with clubs, the Black Knight saw the face of the man who was supposed to be his friend and faithful servant, and who had now attempted to murder him.

'What could urge one of your rank to such a foul deed?' asked the Black Knight. 'Can the gold of my good brother

John buy the swords of nobles for the work of murder?
Do you beg for your life, rascal?' 'Who begs for life when under the lion's paw?' was the

reply.

'Take it unasked then,' said the Black Knight. 'The lion does not prey on vermin. Go.'



'I thank your Majesty,' said the knight, in a humble voice, and with a face of shame and misery he went his way.

On hearing these words Locksley cried, 'It is King Richard of the Lion Heart himself,' and fell upon his knees. His example was followed by Friar Tuck and all the band, and prayers for mercy were quickly uttered.

'Fear nothing, my friends,' said Richard. 'I thank you, and I shall reward you. Moreover, I shall see that whatever offences any of you may have committed are forgiven, and

that you are all enabled to return to your homes and trades in fear neither of the law nor of the law's officers.'

Loud cheers followed this promise that they need be outlaws no longer, but could again become the honest and peaceable citizens that they had been before the harsh and cruel Norman laws made them criminals against their will. At this moment Ivanhoe and Gurth came upon the scene.

CHAPTER 35

Athelstane appears at his own funeral feast

THAT evening King Richard the First, called Richard of the Lion Heart, with Ivanhoe, Wamba, and Gurth, rode into the courtyard of the castle of Coningsburgh.

A huge black banner which floated from the top of the tower showed that the funeral ceremony of the former owner was still in progress.

All around the castle was a scene of busy life and activity, for at such a time, not only all who had any kind of connexion with the dead man were welcomed to the funeral feast, but all neighbours and passers-by also. As Athelstane had been a great and wealthy noble, this custom was observed to the fullest extent, and hundreds ate and drank until they could no longer do either.

In the courtyard great numbers of large tables, set forth with food and drink, were crowded with Saxon labourers, Norman soldiers, workmen, jugglers, singers, travellers, players, pedlars, palmers, priests, servants, and all kinds of people of the lower classes. Within, at the tables in the great hall, were people of higher rank, relations of the dead man, neighbours, passing knights and gentlemen, officials, and most of the well-born inhabitants of that part of the county.

King Richard and Ivanhoe passed up into the crowd of the great hall, while Wamba and Gurth found places at a table in the courtyard.

In an apartment above the great hall sat about a dozen of the most noble and distinguished of the relations of Athelstane, chief of whom was Cedric the Saxon. To this chamber Ivanhoe and King Richard made their way, Ivanhoe keeping his face covered, and King Richard being known to Cedric only as the Black Knight.

Having offered the two new-comers refreshment, Cedric said to the Black Knight, 'Sir Knight, it would give me pleasure to take you and your companion to the Lady Edith, the mother of the dead Lord Athelstane. She would be glad to thank you for the brave and noble part you took in rescuing her son and me.'

He then led the way into another chamber, in which were seated the Saxon ladies of the household with the Lady Rowena and the Lady Edith.

On being told that the Black Knight had risked his life to save her son, the Lady Edith expressed her deep gratitude to him. The guests then withdrew from the ladies' chamber and returned to the other apartment.

Here the Black Knight said to Cedric, 'I wish to remind you, noble Thane, that you offered to do me a service and give me a reward should I ask it. I do ask it now.'

'Then it is granted before it is asked,' was the reply. 'Cedric the Saxon is a man of his word.'

'First know who I am,' said the other. 'I am Richard, King of England.'

'King Richard!' cried Cedric in the greatest surprise. 'The Black Knight is King Richard!'

'Yes, noble Saxon,' said the king, 'and I stoop to beg a favour of you. Forgive your son! Take him back into your affection, and confess and show the love you really bear him. He is here before you, and craves your pardon and your blessing.'

Wilfred knelt at his father's feet. 'My father—my father! Grant me your forgiveness,' he cried, uncovering his face.

'And this is Wilfred my son!' said Cedric. 'My forgiveness you have. Return to your home and be my son indeed. The Lady Rowena must complete two years' mourning for the noble Athelstane, as for her betrothed husband. At the end of that time we will speak of your marriage with her. If I consented to your wedding her while Athelstane is newly dead, his ghost would burst from the grave and stand before us to forbid such a dishonour to his memory.'

As he spoke, the door was flung open and Athelstane, dressed in his grave-clothes, stood before them—pale, thin, haggard, and looking like a moving corpse, a ghost, or a man risen from the dead.

Great fear fell upon all present. Cedric started back and retreated as far as the wall of the chamber would permit, as the figure of Athelstane came forward. Ivanhoe's mouth gaped open in surprise and terror. Richard mumbled a prayer for protection and the forgiveness of his sins.

'In the name of God,' said Cedric to what seemed to be the ghost of his dead friend, 'if you are mortal, say so. If you are a spirit, tell us why you visit us, and what we can do to give you repose. Living or dead, noble Athelstane, speak to me, your old friend Cedric.'

'I will,' replied Athelstane, 'as soon as I can get my breath, and you will give me a chance. Alive, did you say? I am as much alive as a man can be who has spent three days in a vault and lived on bread and water.'

'But, noble Athelstane, I myself saw you struck down by the fierce Templar,' said Richard. 'I thought his sword went through your skull down to your teeth.'

'You thought wrongly then,' replied Athelstane; 'his blade turned in his hand as it cut through the handle of my mace, and struck me with the flat side instead of the sharp edge. I was only stunned, and not cut at all. When I came to myself I found I was wrapped up in grave-clothes, and for some time I could not stir hand or foot. I shouted, and the abbot and monks of Saint Edmund's monastery

came running to me in the greatest surprise. I knew where I was then. I called for food and drink, and they brought me meat and wine. The wine must have contained some drug, for I went off to sleep at once. The rascally monks then made up their minds that as I had been dead, I should stay dead, or they would lose all the lands, money, cattle, and property, which go to the monastery if I die without heirs. But I will hang the lot of them! When I awoke the second time I was in a pitch-dark vault, bound hand and foot and chained to the wall. I was now buried alive in a vault in order that they might be my heirs. For three days I was chained like a dog in the darkness with nothing to eat but stale bread, and nothing to drink but foul water. There I might have been until I really died, but this morning the jailer of my prison was so drunk that he turned the lock of the door before he shut it, and when he went away the door swung open. When I got used to the light I saw that my chains were very rusted and weak. Before long I broke them and freed my hands and feet. Going out of the vault and up the stairs, I found the monastery empty. The rogues had come here to eat the funeral feast of a man they knew to be alive, and to pray for the soul of their benefactor while he lay in their dungeon! I will hang every man of them and burn their monastery! Going to the stables, I found my own horse, in the abbot's stall. No doubt he thought he was going to have it now. I will throw him from these battlements, and hang his rascal monks in a row.'

'Think not of them now, noble Athelstane,' said Cedric, 'but of England and her hopes. You have come back to be the Saxon leader. Here before you is Richard of the Lion Heart. Tell him that he shall not wear the crown of England until he has dealt with you—a Saxon prince of the house of Alfred the Great.'

'Is this Richard, King of England?' cried Athelstane. 'Then I take this chance of telling him I am his faithful

and loyal subject. One king is as good as another, and I have had enough of fighting, deaths, burials, and grave-clothes to last me all my life. No, Cedric, give up your mad ideas, and do as I do—kneel before King Richard and swear to be true to him.'

'Do you give up all hope and all claim to the crown your fathers wore?' asked Cedric in great anger. 'And what of the Lady Rowena, whom I hoped to see sharing a throne with you?'

'Cedric,' said Athelstane, 'the Lady Rowena cares more for Wilfred's glove than for any crown I could give her. I want neither a kingdom nor a wife. Give your ward to your son, and give me a little peace. I wish to eat, drink, and be merry, to live and let live, and I tell you I am the faithful and loyal subject of King Richard.'

'But where is he, and where is Wilfred?'

On inquiry it was found that a Jew had come to the castle and sent a message to Wilfred of Ivanhoe, who, on getting this, had at once gone down to the courtyard, had a talk with the Jew, and then ridden quickly away from the castle, followed by Gurth, who bore his armour. Before going, he had left a message for the Black Knight, who on receipt of it had also left the chamber, gone down to speak with the Jew, and then ridden off after Ivanhoe.

CHAPTER 36

Ivanhoe is not too late. The Judgement of God.

LET us now go to the monastery of Templestowe, at the hour when the fate of Rebecca the Jewess is to be decided.

In the lists belonging to the knights of the Order, outside the monastery, a throne had been set up for the Grand Master and seats for the Templars and their guests. Hundreds of people had gathered from the neighbourhood to see the fight and the burning of the wicked witch.

At the end of the lists was a great pile of logs arranged round a big iron stake or post. To this the victim would be chained; the logs would be piled about her body and then set alight. Four coal-black African slaves stood near, to carry out this horrible work.

When the hour fixed for the punishment was tolled by the big bell of the monastery, the gates opened and a knight carrying the banner of the Order came forth, followed by six trumpeters, the chief knights, and the President of the monastery. Next came the Grand Master, and behind him, in full armour, Brian de Bois-Guilbert, who that day had either to fight any champion who might defend Rebecca, or be treated as a bewitched madman. Behind came the rest of the knights and monks, followed by a long train of attendants, servants, and menials.

When the Grand Master had ascended the throne and the knights were seated in the galleries and stands, Malvoisin, the President of the Templestowe Monastery, rode out into the lists and declared that the good Knight, Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, accused the Jewess Rebecca of sorcery and witchcraft, that she had been tried and found guilty, and that unless any knight would come forward as her champion and successfully defend her with lance and sword against Sir Brian, she would at once be burnt to death as a witch.

The heralds then blew a long flourish on their trumpets and cried Bois-Guilbert's challenge to any knight who would dare to appear as Rebecca's champion. No one in the whole assembly supposed for one moment that the challenge would be answered.

A second time the heralds blew their trumpets, and the challenge was repeated. A third time this was done, and still there was no answer. Not a voice was heard in all that great crowd of people in reply to the heralds' question whether any one believed in Rebecca's innocence and would take her part in trial by combat.

Just as the Grand Master was about to pass sentence of death, and order Rebecca to be chained to the stake, a knight was seen to gallop into the lists. 'A champion! A champion!' cried the people, in joy at the chance of seeing a fight as well as a burning.

Rebecca gazed at the knight in hope, but her heart quickly sank again. He had galloped so far that his horse could hardly stand on its legs, and he seemed scarcely able to keep in his saddle.

'Are you a knight and a gentleman of good family?' asked Malvoisin of the new-comer.

'I am,' was the reply. 'My name is better known than yours, Malvoisin, and my family is of higher rank and more noble descent. I am Wilfred of Ivanhoe.'

'I will not fight you now, boy,' said Bois-Guilbert; 'get to your bed, and when your wounds are healed I will show you how impudent boys should be chastised.'

'Why did you not do so then at Acre and at Ashby?' replied Ivanhoe. 'Twice have I flung you to the ground. Remember your boast in the hall of Rotherwood! Remember your gold chain and the palmer's ivory box. Fight me now, or I will take both and proclaim you a coward, a liar, and a rogue, in every court of Europe and in every monastery of your Order.'

Bois-Guilbert gave one look at Rebecca, whom he longed to save and marry, but Wilfred's abuse he could not bear. Yet if he killed him Rebecca must die!

'Dog of a Saxon,' he cried, 'prepare for death.'

They then withdrew to the opposite ends of the lists, put on their great helmets and took their heavy lances and shields. As he put on his master's helmet and closed the face-guard, Bois-Guilbert's servant noticed that the Templar looked more like a corpse than a living man, so white was his face. The next minute it was dark and swollen, as though all the blood of his body was in his head. 'My master is ill,' thought he.

When both knights were ready, the heralds gave the signal and they dashed towards each other. As all had expected, the tired horse and wounded man rolled on the



ground before the fierce, strong war-horse and powerful arm of the Templar. Ivanhoe leapt to his feet and drew his sword. And then a strange thing was seen to happen. Bois-Guilbert, who had not even been touched by Wilfred's

lance, reeled in his saddle, swayed from side to side, and then fell with a crash to the ground, where he lay as though dead. Rushing up to him, Wilfred placed his foot upon the fallen man's neck, and raising his sword, cried, 'Yield or die.'

No voice came forth from the Templar's helmet.

'Yield, or I will slay you,' cried Wilfred again. Neither sound nor movement followed.

'Spare him, Sir Knight,' said the Grand Master at this moment. 'He is beaten, and the Jewess is free. We declare her innocent, since God has seen fit to give the victory to her champion.'

When his squires unlaced Bois-Guilbert's helmet, the reason of his fall was seen. He was dead. The passions and wrath, the hatred and rage, the horror that he had felt at the idea of Rebecca's death, all the warring feelings of his soul, had killed him. Unscathed by the lance of his enemy, he had died a victim to the violence of his own contending passions.

'This is indeed the judgement of God,' said the Grand Master. 'His will be done. Let the maiden go where she will at once.'

CHAPTER 37

The King at Templestowe. Conclusion.

As the Grand Master spoke, he was interrupted by the clattering of the hoofs of horses advancing so rapidly and in such numbers as to shake the ground. A minute later the Black Knight, followed by a large body of knights, galloped into the lists.

'I am too late,' said he. 'I had hoped to kill this Bois-Guilbert myself. Ivanhoe, you were not in a fit condition for an adventure like this. You were scarcely able to ride, much less to fight!'

'God punished him, your Majesty,' replied Wilfred; 'he did not fall by my hand.'

